

IN THE
DAYS
OF THE
PIONEERS



EDWARD S. ELLIS







A WONDERFUL SHOT.

Frederick L. Allen.

BOONE AND KENTON SERIES, No. 3

IN THE

DAYS OF THE PIONEERS

SEQUEL TO "THE PHANTOM OF THE RIVER"

BY

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IN THE
DAYS OF THE PIONEERS.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE TRAIL.

AGNES ALTMAN, who was walking a few steps in advance of George Ashbridge along the forest trail, abruptly paused, and looking back, exclaimed in a frightened undertone:

“Something is wrong; there are Indians between us and the block-house.”

The youth stepped quickly forward beside his betrothed, and laying his hand upon her arm, asked in the same startled manner:

“What has alarmed you, Agnes?”

“I can never forget those Shawanoe signals

which we heard that summer, when going down the river in the flatboat, and on our return with Kenton and Boone."

"I am sure all of us who caught the faint sounds will remember them to his dying day; but what of it?"

"Twice during the last ten minutes the same signal has reached my ears."

Young Ashbridge was uneasy and strove to disbelieve that which he did not wish to believe.

"You know Jethro is a short distance in advance; he has become quite a woodsman during the year spent at the block-house. It may be that he has been practicing upon the signals."

The fair but frightened maiden shook her head.

"I wished I could think so, but it is not he; I am sure of that."

"And why!"

"The first time I heard it, it was off there," she said, pointing in the direction of the Ohio; "and the next, which was only a few seconds later, it was in the opposite course,

and several yards away. The same person could not have made the two calls."

George Ashbridge was in sore perplexity. Accompanied by his beloved Agnes, and the faithful negro servant, Jethro Juggens, they had left the block-house on the Ohio side of the river, and following the ten miles of woodland path, reached the two log-houses standing in the clearing, long before the sun was at meridian. More properly they arrived at a point opposite the clearing, for, as the reader will remember, the primitive structure stood on the Kentucky side of the Ohio.

There was no canoe available with which to cross the stream, and the three contented themselves with viewing the buildings, as may be said, at a distance. So far as they could discover, the cabin had suffered no material injury, and they set out on their return in high spirits, hoping that in a short time the two families that had undergone so much privation, annoyance, suffering and peril would be at liberty to make their way again to the clearing, there to settle and remain for the rest of their lives.

The reports of the runners and scouts had been favorable for weeks, and though all advised against a permanent removal until the summer was more advanced, the parents of the lovers viewed with some misgiving their visit down the river with no companion except Jethro Juggens.

But the excursion, or picnic, as it would have been called in these later days, was made, the servant carrying substantial lunch to avoid the delay of shooting and preparing game, and the little party were now some three or four miles on their way homeward, with the early summer sun almost directly overhead, when Agnes paused with the conviction that their presence had been discovered by hostile Indians, who were planning to cut them off.

Both she and her escort were fully armed. The clumsy flintlocks of pioneer days were so ponderous that it was work for a strong man to handle them with deftness and effect, but the missionary, J. B. Finley—a name still held in the highest respect and reverence—presented the young lady with a weapon of such

dainty make that she quickly became an expert in its use. Clad in strong homespun and strong shoes, which could not conceal her comeliness of form, she carried also her powder horn and bullet-pouch, and may be said to have been as thoroughly equipped as the sturdy youth that had wooed and won her heart.

"I believe you are right," he whispered, after a minute's listening, "I thought Kenton had taught me how to detect 'signs' when in the woods, but neither of the signals that reached your ears was heard by me."

"I was in advance and nearer to them," she said, with a faint smile.

"Yes, fully ten feet," he added. "That accounts for it; but, Agnes, we must leave the trail we are following. What has become of Jethro?"

"Providence seems to have protected him most strangely heretofore, but it is not likely to last."

"It may and may not; there is not a man at the block-house that is a better rifle-shot than he. He did more service when we

came down the river than your father, mine, or I, and I had almost said Kenton himself, but that would be unjust, for it was the brain work of Kenton that told."

"Jethro deserved as much credit for the work he had done on the return with his sail on the flatboat, and yet he seemed to stumble and blunder into it all; but," added Agnes, rousing herself, "are we to stand here until they come upon us?"

Young Ashbridge had been debating the question, while the fragmentary conversation was going on. It was necessary to leave the forest trail without delay, and the question he asked himself was whether to turn to the right or left.

The path between the clearing and block-house ran close to the northern bank of the Ohio, so that when traveling eastward a deviation of a few yards—more or less—to the right brought one to the margin of the river. Had the young pioneer possessed a canoe, or known where to place his hand upon one, he would have been instant to take advantage of it. Water leaves no trail, and he had learned

long before of the perfect screen often afforded by the overhanging vegetation and undergrowth; but that means was out of the question now, and he quickly reached a decision.

“One of the signals was on the right of the trail and the other on the left; that looks as if they were certain we would pass between them. Therefore, we must turn to the left and flank them.”

“That will take us deeper into the woods. But I think you are right; let us wait no longer.”

Leaving the faintly-marked path, Agnes stepped among the trees to the left with the assurance of one who knew she was doing the right thing, but running a few paces, her companion placed himself slightly in advance of her.

“I think I should lead,” he remarked, in a low voice, with an affectionate glance at her.

“Are you acquainted with this section?”

“I have never visited it. 'Sh!”

The signals to which reference has been made, and which caused this deviation in their course, were now heard by both, or,

more properly, one was heard. It came from a point directly in front and at no great distance. Young Ashbridge instantly moved more abruptly to the left, so as to make sure of passing around the danger point.

Less than a minute passed, when the response to the bird-like call came from the direction of the river—almost as alarmingly close as the first.

“They are expecting us—they are suspicious over our delay,” remarked George, conscious that the red men were “drawing it exceedingly fine.” “It would not have done to wait any longer.”

“Perhaps we have waited too long already.”

The youth did not reply. Glancing over his shoulder to see that his companion was near him, he quickened his pace. The ground rapidly increased in roughness. They descended a narrow valley, fully twenty feet deep, passed around several boulders, and, as they began to climb the opposite side, found themselves among numerous large and jagged rocks, where it was impossible to make rapid progress.

Ashbridge was disposed to regard this as

favorable. The keen vision of the American Indian, which enables him to follow a fugitive's footsteps over the leaves with the unerring certainty of a bloodhound, is often at fault when confronted by solid rock, where a man can travel without leaving the slightest impression.

"Here is a steep climb," remarked the youth, pausing before a mass of stones, sloping ahead of them at a sharp angle. "I am afraid you can't make it, Agnes."

"Can you?"

"Of course!"

"Then lead on; I can follow where you dare lead."

Holding his rifle firmly grasped in his left hand, Ashbridge seized a projecting ledge with his right, and went up as nimbly as an acrobat. Ascending twenty feet, he turned about to see how his companion was succeeding. She was near enough to touch him with her outstretched hand.

"Good!" he muttered, admiringly. "You are doing better than I expected. Let me assist you."

"Thank you, I do not need it. You have only to make sure that you are following the right direction. Do you hear that?"

How could he help hearing it? The tremulous whistle sounded so close in advance that he glanced affrightedly in front, expecting to see one or more warriors within a dozen feet.

He failed to catch sight of the painted visage, but the rocks, still towering a rod above and interlaced with and half hidden by vine, undergrowth, bush, and stunted trees, might have concealed a dozen painted Shawanoes. That some of them were there, and had detected the approach of the fugitives, George Ashbridge considered so certain that he paused with a feeling akin to dismay.

"I'm afraid we're being trapped," he whispered.

"We shall be if we stand here another minute."

"Let's return and seek another course."

He wheeled to carry out his own suggestion, when the dreaded call was repeated from the rear and equally close to the one in front. The delay on the trail, slight as it was, told

the Shawanoes the truth. The fugitives had interpreted the signals and attempted to circumvent their danger by passing to the left of it. With startling celerity the warriors set out to head them off, and it looked as if they had succeeded.

"Great heaven! we are too late!" gasped young Ashbridge.

"No; run to the left; the way is open!" whispered Agnes, pointing to the irregular masses of rocks, half hidden by vines and vegetation.

"But you?" repeated the distressed youth.

"Don't think of me! Off with you! Quick!"

Forgetting his usual prudence in the sudden peril, he dashed ahead at the top of his speed. It was "going it blind" in every sense of the word, for he could have no knowledge of what was in advance. He could only strain every nerve and trust to Providence.

This desperate headlong flight lasted but a few minutes. The end came almost as soon as he anticipated. He was bounding forward

like a chamois, able to see only one leap in advance, when he was confronted by a yawning chasm so wide that he was sure he could not leap it.

But he was so near, and his impetus was so great at the moment of making the terrifying discovery, that it was impossible to check himself. Go forward he must, even though it was to be dashed to destruction. Concentrating all his strength and muscles in the single prodigious effort, and forgetting for the moment his fair companion, he bounded with might and main out over the yawning abyss.

To his own amazement he cleared it as may be said by a hair, striking on the very edge opposite, where his momentum carried him away from death before he could topple backward among the rocks fifty feet below.

"My God, what have I done!" exclaimed the horrified youth; "I have abandoned Agnes. Nothing can save her! Don't! Stop, stop!"

But his appeal was unheeded. She had set out to follow him, and death alone could check her advance. The delicate foot was poised for

a moment on the margin of the precipice, and then, as graceful as a bird, she leaped the fearful chasm, landing upon the other side several inches beyond where the feet of her lover had struck.

“Heavens!” muttered the astounded youth, “is there anything you can’t do, Agnes? I was sure you were lost.”

“We both shall be if we linger here.”

And to prevent his doing so she now sped on in advance. Ashbridge would have anticipated her, but that at that instant he caught sight of the very thing he expected and dreaded to see; a painted Shawanoe came bounding along the crest of the rocks, over which the fugitives had just passed.

The sight of the hideous miscreant seemed to cool the blood of the youth, who, to use a common expression, had been “rattled” for a few minutes by the hurricane sweep of events. He dropped on one knee and brought his rifle to his shoulder, with the muzzle levelled at the approaching warrior.

In that stirring moment the strange fancy came to George Ashbridge that, if he showed

mercy to the fierce wretch, he and his companions might spare him and his companion, whose peril caused him an anguish tenfold greater than could any danger to himself.

“Stop, or I’ll shoot ” he shouted.

Foolish threat! The Indian had seen him from the first, and was not to be checked or hindered of his purpose by any warning from the paleface, whom he looked upon as already secured beyond peradventure to him.

The Shawanoe was coming with the speed of the wind. The long, black, dangling hair, surmounted by several eagle feathers, fluttered away from his shoulders, and the moccasins doubled and turned under his body, as if he were running a race in the open plain. The tomahawk and knife were in the girdle and the rifle gripped in the left hand. Through the black and crimson and white splashes of paint, his eyes glowed like a demon’s. He was looking straight at the kneeling youth and showed no fear, even though the eye of that youth was ranging along the barrel, and his forefinger curved around the trigger of the weapon.

Straight to the chasm's edge dashed the red man, as if every inch of the wild section was familiar to him, and, resting the right foot upon the lip of rock for a single second, shot upward and outward like a rubber ball.

"Fool," thought young Ashbridge, "it is suicide."

The sharp, whip-like crack of the gun was accompanied rather than followed by the ear-splitting screech of the Shawanoe, who, while his body was in mid-air, flung his arms aloft, with a frenzied flirt of the rifle above his head, and drew up his feet so spasmodically under him that, when he landed on the other side his position was at fault, and, instead of remaining secure or sustaining himself, he toppled backwards and went tumbling downward among the rocks, dead before he struck the bottom.

Fortunate, indeed, would it have been had he been the only foe in the neighborhood; but when at the crest of that brief parabola above the ravine where he was fatally "winged," the keen eye of George Ashbridge, ranging along his rifle barrel, showed one—

two—at least three other warriors speeding after the slain Shawanoe, and seemingly as free from fear as he.

At the same moment two unwelcome and startling truths flashed upon the young pioneer; the hostiles must arrive at the chasm's edge before he could reload his rifle, and his own situation was so exposed that even now, if they chose to aim and fire, nothing could save him.

Clearly something must be done, and that, too, without an instant's delay.

CHAPTER II.

THE CAVERN AMONG THE ROCKS.

GEORGE ASHBRIDGE was on his feet in an instant, and, crouching low, ran swiftly from the chasm into which he had just tumbled the Shawanoe. Had the other warriors even then chosen to aim and fire he must have fallen, but he gained time in the few seconds at command to fling himself into a natural depression, where he was secure against any bullet, so long as he exercised ordinary prudence.

His sole prayer was that he might gain time to reload his gun before his pursuers could leap across the ravine. He hoped the fate of the leader would deter the others long enough to permit him to do this. Nine times out of ten this would have been the case, but it looked as if it must fail in this instance.

Had it been in these modern days of repeat-

ing rifles, he could have held twice as many hostiles at bay, but it took many torturing seconds to pound down the wadding upon the powder, which he dashed down the barrel, to push the bullet more carefully after it, and then to pour the black sand from the narrow snout of his powder-horn into the pan.

Meanwhile the foremost of the three Shawanoes halted close to the ravine and was instantly joined by the others. They spoke quickly to each other and glanced across towards the point where the white man had vanished, and where, peeping every instant over the rock in front of him, he was striving in frenzied haste to make ready to fire his weapon again.

Ashbridge knew that if he could drop a second Indian, the other two would dart to cover, or would fly from the spot, forgetting, in their panic, that his gun was again empty.

But the hesitation on the part of the Shawanoes was but momentary. To the dismay of the youth, the Indian who had led the three, after another quick glance at the chasm, recoiled a single step, and left the margin by the

ravine with the grace and ease shown by Agnes Altman a few minutes before.

The gun of the youth was not ready, and he could do nothing to stop the hostile; and yet some one else did. At the same point that his predecessor was smitten he was mortally pierced, and then plunged with a shriek to the bottom, the incident in all respects being a repetition of the first, except that the fatal shot was fired by another.

The effect was precisely what Ashbridge anticipated. The remaining two could not have whisked out of sight more quickly had the earth opened and swallowed them. One instant three Shawanoes were before him; the next they were gone.

"Where can Agnes be?" was the question that thrilled the youth the moment that the peril had passed. "It must have been she who fired that shot, but I have no idea of the point it came from."

Now that he had liberty he glanced searchingly around. The dense vines, shrubbery and undergrowth prevented his seeing far in any direction, but he believed the rocks sloped

away, and that Agnes must have reached a considerable lower point than where he lay, before she fired the shot that so effectually checked their pursuers.

There was no time to throw away, however, in speculation. It is conceded to be bad policy for a force to divide in the presence of an enemy, and he and Agnes were separated, with the enemy at hand and the danger becoming more imminent at every moment.

Ashbridge began moving cautiously, sufficiently so to escape a bullet which whizzed past his face, and came from some point he knew not where. A swift backward leap, and he was out of that peril for the moment, with his loaded gun firm in his grasp.

"Agnes," he called, guardedly, "where are you?"

"She was not the one to leave him in danger, and she answered his call in the manner his heart craved by coming forward from the rocky undergrowth and wood in front of him.

"We are safe for the present," he said, "but I wish night was closer at hand, for we

are in a bad situation. There are a good many Indians in the woods around us."

"I know that, for I have heard them moving and signaling to each other from several different points."

"That shot of yours was fired in the nick of time," said young Ashbridge, admiringly. "I never saw it beaten."

Agnes looked at him in amazement.

"I do not understand you, George."

"That Indian you shot just as he was leaping the gorge; you picked him off precisely as I did."

"You have made a mistake, George; I have not fired my gun since we left home this morning. I heard the report of two rifles, but neither of them was mine."

"I never dreamed of its being any one else. Whoever it was, he did us a good turn."

"It must have been Jethro."

"Unlikely, for he could hardly have got to the spot from the trail so soon. It may be Boone or Kenton, or some of our friends from the block-house. We have cause to be very thankful, but it will not do to count

upon that friend's help without work of our own."

"I have thought it might be an enemy who did it—that is, some Indian who is as bitter a foe of the Shawanoes as he is of the white people. He would as lief shoot one as the other."

They now began picking their way out of the dangerous section. The belief of both was that the gigantic rocks, the gorges, ravines, boulders, vines, and matted undergrowth covered a comparatively small space, and that vigorous work would soon take them to a portion where they could travel more rapidly.

There is little doubt that they would have extricated themselves with slight difficulty, could they have known the number and whereabouts of their enemies; but Agnes Altman was right when she said she had heard signaling to the rear of the ravine, where the peril first broke upon them. The problem was to get away from the perilous region without coming in collision with their enemies. The prospect of success was slight indeed.

Ashbridge placed himself a step in advance of his companion.

"Your ears are sharper than mine, as are your eyes; we must use them all—to the utmost advantage. 'Sh! do you hear anything!"

"Yes; but it is from the rear, from one of those on the other side of the ravine."

"And there goes the answer from the front; we're in a bad place, Agnes."

"Here, George, to the right; follow me."

He was bewildered. Strange as was the place to the girl, she seemed guided by some subtle intuition that kept her feet from going astray. She leaped forward, now to the right, then to the left, bounding from a boulder to the solid ground, then clambering over and around rocks, all the time steadily ascending, until both knew they were a number of feet higher than when they leaped the gorge.

Ashbridge was struck with wonder at the nimbleness and dexterity of the fair girl, who, through force of circumstances, had been changed from a follower to a guide. Though an athlete himself, it was all he could do to keep pace with her.

The sole purpose that guided the two was to get as far from the ravine as they could in the shortest possible space of time. Two Shawanoes had fallen in the fierce pursuit of the young people, and the promptings of revenge would urge them to the utmost. True, in running from them, it looked as if they were sweeping directly into the arms of a larger party; but the latter had not yet laid eyes on them, while the former had; it was to be presumed, therefore, that their line of pursuit was more intelligent.

Suddenly a whoop sounded in front, and the figures of several warriors were seen flitting among the trees and undergrowth, within a stone's cast of Agnes, who still held her place at the front. Believing that the crisis had arrived, and the final stand must be made, Ashbridge stopped short and brought his rifle to his shoulder.

“Don't!” she called; “here is a refuge.”

He turned just as she leaped lightly over a decayed log lying across her path, and the next instant, by a sharp turn to the left, whisked out of sight. He was after her in

a twinkling, the whole thing being done so quickly, that it may be said it was all over before he comprehended what had really taken place.

The fair fugitive had darted into a cavern whose existence she detected at the moment her escort turned at bay. The entrance was broad and high enough to admit a man in a slightly stooping posture, and faced a ledge of rocks, which extended in front of the opening.

This path reached barely a yard beyond the entrance, when it ended abruptly against a solid wall of stone, so that the only approach was that over which the fugitives had just passed. The ravine showed a depth of fully forty feet from the mouth of the cavern, with more than half the space above, the whole sixty odd feet being absolutely perpendicular. This much the reader must know to understand the incidents that follow.

The Shawanoes saw that the young man and woman had eluded them for the time; but they saw, too, that they had been entrapped, with not one chance in ten thousand

of escaping. A half-dozen triumphant whoops rang through the solitude; and there could be no doubt that the whole party scattered in the woods would speedily gather in the immediate neighborhood, with a full knowledge of the hopeless situation of the fugitives.

The instant Ashbridge dashed inside, he wheeled, and raised the hammer of his rifle, ready to fire upon the first appearance of an enemy. His belief was that the Shawanoes, who were almost upon his heels, would make a rush in the attempt to overwhelm them. The daring they had already shown gave cause for this belief, and there can be little doubt that had the hostiles followed up their advantage, it would have been all over with Ashbridge and Agnes.

It is rarely, however, that the American Indian can be brought to "face the music" for any length of time. In the pursuit of the flying fugitives, they had already displayed a dash and courage beyond their nature, and as the slow minutes passed, with the youth standing at bay, the stillness remained profound, as if no warrior was within a hundred miles.

Agnes Altman, upon entering the cave, stopped as abruptly as her companion, but at a distance of several paces further in the refuge. She faced outward like him, with her small rifle firmly grasped and ready for instant use. Then, as if in obedience to the prompting that her place was not behind, but at the side of her defender, she stepped lightly forward.

Neither spoke nor moved for several minutes. Their faculties were concentrated in those of listening and looking.

"They will not come," she finally remarked in an undertone.

"Not for the present, but we are by no means done with them. They have only to starve us out."

"Unless they become impatient and use fire."

Ashbridge had not thought of that, but he saw the imminence of the peril.

"We are sure of safety for a few hours, and probably until night. I think, Agnes, that we ought to learn something about this refuge, which turned up so providentially. It won't do to leave the front unguarded, so I

will let you do the exploration. You don't need your gun, and perhaps I shall; leave it with me."

She leaned it against the side of the cavern, and began timidly making her way into the blank darkness behind her. The flood of sunshine which lit up the opening and the front with subdued light penetrated but a short distance within the cavern, so that she had advanced but a few steps when she was enveloped in impenetrable gloom.

The utmost care was necessary, and she moved forward inch by inch, with outstretched hands, sliding her feet slowly over the flinty floor with the shortest of steps and the most frequent pauses. The task was not only delicate but hard. Projecting crags were touched on the right and left, and depressions and obstructions continually presented themselves. Once she uttered a gasp of affright, believing she had stepped off the edge of her support into a chasm of fatal depths; but the descent was only slight, and though she fell upon her hands and knees, she received no hurts or bruises.

Turning her face, she saw the sunlit opening perhaps fifty feet distant, with the figure of George in silhouette against the soft radiance beyond.

“Why does he stand thus?” she asked, with a pang of fear. “He seems to forget that there is an abundance of room for the Shawanoes to hide themselves on the other side of the ravine and pick him off without danger to themselves.”

It really looked as if the youth was unaware of this form of peril, which impressed Agnes Altman so strongly. She stood debating whether to return and warn him of his danger, when George himself settled the matter by stepping aside and assuming a sitting posture, where the protection was needed.

Agnes was halting between two opinions. With the natural curiosity of her sex, she wished to continue her groping until she learned more about the cavern, whose extent had already proven to be greater than she had suspected. But of what avail? The exploration would require hours, and was accompanied by no little personal risk, so long as it

was prosecuted without the aid of a torch. That she had escaped danger thus far was no guarantee that her immunity would continue.

The question which held her undecided whether to advance or retreat was whether it was not possible that there was some avenue at the rear by which they might reach the outer world, and thus elude their enemies, or by which those enemies would steal upon them unawares. The red men were likely to be acquainted with all the windings and turnings of the refuge, for these were the grounds over which they had roamed and hunted from time immemorial.

A soft, subdued murmur came faintly from some point within the recesses of the cavern, now and then dying away so that the straining ear could hardly detect it, then sounding with gentle distinctness that she was sure it must reach the brave young man who was standing guard at the main entrance.

"It is the sound of falling water," she reflected. "Who ever suspected that a place like this existed so near the block-house? If I

had a light I would go farther, but it is not wise to do so now."

Pausing to listen no longer, she retraced her steps much more hurriedly than she had entered the place, receiving several stumbles in her haste.

Light as were her footsteps, the listening Ashbridge detected her approach some minutes before she appeared at his side.

"The cavern is a good deal larger than either of us suspected," he remarked in the guarded undertone both used. "How far is it to the rear?"

"I have no idea. I went a long way, and it still seemed as far off as when I left you."

"We must know the truth," said George, gravely. "If there is any way by which those redskins can get to us from the rear we must find it out."

"There is little chance of learning anything without a light, and I see no means of getting that."

"It can be done, but not at present. It is lucky you returned just when you did, for you are needed."

“Why?” asked the startled young woman.

“There is some mischief going on across the gorge directly opposite. I have been certain of it for several minutes. I can’t make it out, and must have your bright eyes to help me in solving the puzzle.”

CHAPTER III.

SHUT IN.

“THE ravine had a width of twenty feet. The wall opposite the mouth of the cavern was also perpendicular, the correspondence of the slight projections and indentations on the two sides suggesting that at some remote age the mass of rock had been split apart by a convulsion of nature, as perhaps in the distant future another earthquake wrench may bring them together again.

This correspondence brought the banks of the gorge to the same level, so that the opposite top was six or seven yards above the opening of the cavern. It was covered with undergrowth and shrubbery growing close to the edge, with sturdy trees in the immediate background.

It will be understood, therefore, that only one direct means of approach to the refuge of

the two fugitives existed, which was the path so providentially presented to them. The Shawanoes could readily advance to the margin on the opposite side, and probably, by means of a fallen tree, could bridge the chasm, but of what avail since there was more convenient means of doing the same thing at other points, and a number of them were on the ground directly over the opening. If the red man succeeded in entering the refuge, it must be by following in the footsteps of the two, unless, perchance, some opening, as yet unknown to the fugitives, existed at the rear of the cavern.

Cautiously taking her place at the side of the entrance, near George Ashbridge, Agnes, after the few words that have been recorded, asked :

“What is it that causes you misgiving?”

“You notice the stunted bushes on the very edge of the banks up yonder?”

“Yes.”

“They have been stirred several times in a way that the wind could not have done. There! you can see it now!”

"It is because there is some one stirring them, and it can be no one except a Shawanoe."

"But what is his purpose?"

"To gain a shot at us to test our watchfulness."

"He can't think we will fire until we have something more than a rustling bush to tempt us."

"We shall have it soon enough."

While the words were in the mouth of Agnes something appeared at the base of the bushes, which, seemingly a part of them, was yet something else. It rose slightly but more distinctly into view.

"It is an eagle's feather," whispered Agnes.

"And is in the crown of an Indian. 'Sh! You had better move further back into the cavern."

"I am already as far back as you."

"'Sh! Look again! There he is."

Two eagle feathers were perceptible, and the next moment the black horsehair-like covering of the Shawanoe's head came to view, and continued rising until beneath the low,

painted forehead two glittering eyes showed above the edge of the gorge. They were elevated just enough to permit the warrior to peer over the rim of the rocks, and, gleaming through the interstices of shrubbery, seemed to project their baleful glow into the mouth of the cavern itself. Fortunately the fugitives were crouching so far back from the entrance that they were invisible.

"Shall I teach him that we are on guard?" cautiously asked Ashbridge.

"No. He is doing no harm; it would be cruel."

"But he is hunting for the chance. Have you not learned long since, Agnes, that all mercy to them is thrown away?"

"Well, it is so dreadful; but do as you think best," replied the maiden, turning her glance away that she might not witness the shocking deed.

The youth was lying flat on his face. He now brought his rifle round to the front, and supporting his elbows in proper position, sighted carefully at the forehead above the basilisk eyes. The Indian was peering fixedly

into the mouth of the cavern, as though he would penetrate with his vision the gloom, and the youth could not help suspecting that he saw both him and his companion. If so, he must have suspected the suspicious movement of the hands and weapons, for, while the eye of Ashbridge was ranging along the barrel, and his finger increasing the pressure upon the trigger, he became aware there was no target in front of him. The Shawanoe had vanished as though he had not been.

“Well, my respected friend, you came as near taking a trip to your last hunting grounds as you will ever come again without taking it.”

“Why didn’t you shoot?” asked Agnes, turning her gaze again upon the opposite bank.

“Because there is nothing to shoot at.”

“He must have seen you.”

“It looks so, but why, then, didn’t he shoot at me?”

“He will ; let’s change our position.”

She set the example by springing up and stepping quickly back to the other side of the cavern, where it was impossible for the most

lynx-eyed warrior to detect them. George did the same, and it was well the precaution was taken.

He was standing in a crouching position, peering forward, when he noted that the bush was again agitated. Before he could read the meaning of it, a puff of smoke, with a crimson needle in its centre, bounded towards him, and, at the moment of the resounding explosion, a bullet flattened itself against the rock on the very spot where he was lying a few minutes before.

"He saw me, after all!" exclaimed Ashbridge, with a thrill of gratitude at his own narrow escape.

"There he is again!"

True enough. To the astonishment of the fugitives the Shawanoe peered over as if to learn the result of his shot.

He never learned it. While his head was elevated like that of a turtle peeping from his shell, George Ashbridge fired; and when it is added that his aim was true, enough has been said.

"It is an old maxim I learned long ago,"

remarked the youth, "that the first thing to be done after firing a gun is to load it again."

And he acted upon the law with the coolness of Daniel Boone or Simon Kenton himself.

Agnes was awed by the startling occurrence, and for a few minutes held her peace. Her companion jauntily reloaded his rifle, and when he had poured the powder into the pan, he remarked :

"Now I am ready for the next customer."

This was well enough in its way, but neither could think of the future without a sinking of the heart akin to despair. As long as these two brave young pioneers were able to present an undaunted front—and they would do that to the death—the Shawanoes, no matter how great their number, would hesitate to make an open attack upon them ; but the fugitives were without a mouthful of food to fall back upon. Agnes believed she had detected the sound of running water, which possibly might serve them, but there was no certainty, and thirst overcome ones more quickly than hunger.

There was no means of conveying news to

the block-house of their extremity. The two had left the station that morning in high hopes to gain a view of the clearing, expecting to be home again before nightfall. No alarm would be felt until night closed in, and search would probably be made on the morrow; but what clue could be picked up by so peerless a woodsman as Simon Kenton or Daniel Boone that could help in the hunt?

“If I knew who fired that shot,” remarked Ashbridge, as he sat beside his beloved, “it would help us to form some plan.”

“In what way?”

“That I can hardly tell, so long as I do not know. It seems natural to conclude it was Jethro, and yet I cannot believe it was possible for him to appear so far to the left of the trail, at the very moment his help was needed.”

“He is so aimless in his movements that he may have taken a notion to wander into this section before the danger came.”

“That is the only explanation possible. Perhaps it is the true one. He has the lunch which your mother put up for us, and which would be acceptable at this moment, and more

acceptable before we are through with this business."

"But if not Jethro, who else is it likely to be?"

"We can only guess; I have been hopeful that Kenton, who you know left the block-house several days ago on a scout, may have been on his return and reached this place in time to be of service."

"I wish I could think so, George, but I cannot."

"Stranger things have happened to you as well as to me since we left our home in Western Virginia. Your affair with Wa-on-mon, the Panther, Jethro's performance with the flatboat, the rescue of my little sister Mabel from the Shawanoes; these and other occurrences were more remarkable in their way than the appearance of Simon Kenton at a certain point within a few miles of the block-house."

"It isn't that, but if it was he or Boone, he would have found some way of letting us know of his presence. You and Kenton have a way of signaling each other, when striving to meet

in the woods. Had he fired that shot, which you thought was fired by me, he would not have kept us long in the dark as to whence it came."

"I wish there was less logic in your words," remarked Ashbridge, regretfully, "but I cannot help suspecting you are right. Admitting that our friend is Jethro Juggens, and not Boone or Kenton, he might have found some means of apprising us of his presence."

"Perhaps he thinks the rifle report is sufficient, and is awaiting a favorable opportunity. Besides, if it was Jethro, I am sure he will have all he can do to save himself, without attempting to open communication with us."

"At any rate I don't see any chance of our getting away from here before nightfall."

"And what prospect is there of doing so then?"

"Why, Agnes," said her lover, with a touch of reproach in his manner, "you seem determined to drive away all hope."

"Far from it, George. I am sure that God, who has so befriended us in the past, will not desert us in our extremity; but what can we

gain by trying to see that which does not exist, or forming plans and schemes without something to form them upon?"

"Since you are hopeful, after all, Agnes, tell me upon what you have that feeling?"

"Well," was the thoughtful answer, "I am more likely to be wrong than you are, but it seems to me there are plenty of grounds. In the first place, I am sure that the friend whom we have, or did have a short time ago, in the neighborhood is Jethro."

"And what of that?"

"No one, not even himself, can decide what he will do within any given ten minutes, and yet what is more natural than that he, finding how sorely beset we are, will make all haste to the block-house?"

"So it would seem, and Captain Bushwick has but to know of our peril to hurry to our help. But, leaving Jethro out of the matter, wherein do you see a favorable outlook?"

"There is little moonlight to-night, and what there is will be so veiled by the trees and vegetation that we shall be enveloped in the blackest of darkness."

“And to whom will that be most favorable—the Shawanoes or ourselves?”

“I think to us.”

“You forget there is only one path of escape open, which is that trodden by us in coming here. One, or at least two, warriors can guard that against our flight, or leave it free, so as to induce us to walk out among them.”

“I have been thinking,” said the maiden, with a voice and manner which proved her bright brain was busy, “that maybe we can reach the bottom of the gorge from the opening in front of us.”

“Ah, if we could; but it is fully forty feet below, and there is no rope, or vine, or anything that could be used to hold our weight—unless we might find the material from your dress and my clothing.”

“It is that which has occurred to me.”

The thrill of hope caused by this new and somewhat startling idea quickly passed.

“If such a project is possible, depend upon it, Agnes, the Shawanoes have not overlooked it, and will make sure it does us precious little good.”

“Then we have not yet learned whether there is not some other way out of the cavern than that which is in front.”

“That has caused me more speculation and guess-work than anything else. If there was any way of getting a light, I would settle the question now, leaving you to mount guard until I come back. But though I have a flint and steel, there is nothing to serve as a torch.”

Had such a useful invention as lucifer matches been known, the difficulty would have been solved, provided our friends were plentifully supplied with them, but nothing less than a pine or resinous torch would answer, and that, it need not be said, was beyond their reach.

“We leaped over a log near the mouth of the cavern,” said George. “I didn’t take much notice of it, but it seemed to be dry and decayed, and a piece of it might serve to light me while groping back yonder.”

She caught his arm with some excitement.

“You would not dare attempt it, with them watching for a chance to fire at us; you shall not.”

He was able to smile at her exhibition of feeling.

"I was thinking of making the attempt to-night, when everything will be as dark as pitch."

"Let me take a peep at it."

"Have a care, young lady," he said, half inclined to restrain her.

"I will be more guarded than you," she answered, stealing along the side of the cavern with so much caution that she readily gained a point of observation without drawing any demonstration from the watchful enemies.

"It lies a dozen or fifteen feet up the path, and, as you remember, slants across it. It has lain there a long time, for it is dried and decayed. More than that, too, it is pine."

"The very material to serve us"—

At that instant something whisked into view directly before their eyes, vanishing with such quickness that it was like the passing of a shadow. It was as if a bird of large size had started to fly upward from the bottom of the ravine and fluttering in front of the opening, was so alarmed at the sight of the

fugitives that it darted downward like a flash.

Before they could form an idea of what it meant, it appeared again, and brought its own explanation, for instead of vanishing it caught fast on the ledge, and remained in full sight.

Agnes uttered a low exclamation of pleasure.

“Do you see what it is, George? It was thrown there by Jethro.”

CHAPTER IV.

A RAY OF LIGHT.

AGNES ALTMAN was quick to recognize the package that was twice flung upward from the gorge before it caught and rested on the ledge in front of the opening of the cavern. It was of moderate size, neatly wrapped around with a linen napkin, and, in addition to the food it contained, was weighted with a goodly-sized stone, in order that the thrower might handle it effectively.

It was a strong proof of the self-sacrificing affection of Jethro Juggens, whose vigorous appetite was rarely quiescent, that, without abstracting his portion of the lunch at mid-day, he should incur the great risk he must have run in order to place it at the disposal of his friends.

“Good Jethro!” exclaimed the delighted Agnes; “he believes there can be no suffering

equal to that of hunger, and does all he can to prevent its coming to us."

"And gives himself a pang of starvation. It must have been he who fired the shot at the moment it was so necessary."

Stealing forward as far as was prudent, Ashbridge extended the stock of his rifle outward and gradually worked the parcel within reach of his hand. Being opened, the cooked meat and coarse brown bread were found intact within.

"Let us eat while the chance is ours," remarked the youth, handing a goodly portion to Agnes; "we are in sore peril, but, none the less, I cannot forget that I have an appetite."

"And it is the same with me," replied the young woman, accepting with thanks the food offered her; "but we must not lose sight of the one who has done this." Having taken out all they needed, the maiden carefully re-fastened the napkin around the rest, which was considerably more than they withdrew, and, with a deft toss, flung it out again into the ravine. What the result was they could

only guess, since no sign nor sound came back to them.

But if the Shawanoes were maintaining close watch over the cavern they must have noticed this by-play, which to Jethro Juggens meant great danger. There was good reason, however, to believe it had escaped their observation, and that no immediate ill was likely to follow the exploit. They knew the fugitives were safe within the cavern and would not attempt to leave it before dark. It was not probable, therefore, that the opening was directly under the eye of any one of them at that moment, and had Ashbridge stepped quickly out and picked up the package, it is more than possible that no bullet would have whizzed after him.

It was a radiant day in early summer, when the blue sky was flecked by only a few patches of fleecy clouds, and the air was fragrant with the perfume of bark, of bursting bud and the blossom of wild flowers. The twitter and song of birds echoed from the tree tops, and the earth was redolent with the promise of the glorious fruitage that was to crown the year.

Amid this scene of bounding life and the grandeur of growth and development, "only man was vile." The three who had left the block-house, for a jaunt through the forest, confident of returning to their friends at the end of a few hours, were now fugitives from the fierce red men and environed on every hand by the most fearsome peril.

The knowledge that the faithful Jethro Juggens was so near was not wholly an unalloyed pleasure. It could not be doubted that he would willingly risk his life for them, for he had done so more than once in the past, but the most that could recommend him was his amazing skill with the rifle. Shrewdness and stupidity were so mixed in his composition that it could never be told with certainty what he would, and what he would not do. An inexplainable good fortune had marked his work heretofore, but it was not reasonable to believe that it would continue indefinitely.

Woe betide him if he should fall into the power of the Shawanoes! He had put a mortal insult upon the great chief Wa-on-mon, and by means of his marksmanship had laid

more than one of the leading warriors low. Within the present hour he had slain a daring buck while in the act of leaping the chasm. The American race shares with the Caucasian the bitter prejudice against the African, which, in the case of Jethro Juggens, was intensified by the unpardonable injuries received at his hands.

The proximity of the man, therefore, brought with it the fear that it would complicate matters and add the destruction of himself to the death of the fugitives within the cavern. There was but the single service he could do them; that was to steal away from the neighborhood, while the chance was his, and carry the news to the block-house of the perilous situation of George Ashbridge and Agnes Altman.

Had the "friend at court" proven to be one of the experienced rangers, and especially Simon-Kenton, the peerless woodsman, the hopes of the two would have been increased tenfold, for every step that he took and everything he did would have been actuated by a wise and far-reaching foresight. He would

calculate the result of each movement to the minutest detail, and it is safe to say that if it was within the compass of human possibility to rescue the lovers it would be done.

The feelings of our friends, therefore, may be imagined, as they speculated over the outcome of their dangerous situation.

“If there was any way of communicating with him,” remarked Ashbridge, “I would send him post haste to Captain Bushwick, with an appeal for instant help which would not be in vain.”

“I have wondered whether a note could not be written and flung over into the ravine, telling him what we wish him to do, but there are two objections to a scheme of that kind.”

“What are they?”

“We have no means of writing such a note, and if we had Jethro could not read it.”

“He can spell out simple words, but we have neither pencil nor paper, so it is idle to think of that. There is still another method open to us.”

“What is it?”

“He was at the bottom of the ravine a lit-

tle while ago, when he threw the lunch up to us. He may be there yet, though it is as likely that he has gone away. If not, he can hear my voice when I call to him."

"Do so at once."

"I will; no harm, if no good, can come from it."

Stealing forward as near as was prudent, Ashbridge placed one hand in front of his face, so as to form a funnel, and called:

"Jethro, if you hear me do not answer, but listen! Leave this place as soon as you can and make all haste to the block-house. Tell Captain Bushwick our danger, and that we can be saved only by sending us help without an hour's delay."

For additional safety, the youth repeated these instructions in a still louder voice. He suspected that if Jethro heard him he would be reckless enough to make reply; but, though Ashbridge and Agnes listened closely for several minutes, not the slightest response was returned to them.

"If it was any one else," she said, "I would have been certain that he had left the spot

the moment after furnishing us with dinner."

"If it had been any one else the attempt would not have been made, but, having done it, Jethro would wait for his portion of the lunch to be returned to him. Then he has probably taken himself off, to eat it in peace."

"And we waited long enough for him to get beyond hearing, so, like everything else, this phase of the business must for a time remain in doubt."

"George," remarked his companion, after an interval of thoughtful silence, "it is now past noon, and it looks to me as if the Indians had decided to leave us alone until night. Then will come the crisis."

"Such is my belief, but they are like Jethro; there can be no calculating what they will or will not do. We must not relax our vigilance."

"If the Shawanoes had the bravery to rush down the path over which we came—what then?"

"You would shoot one and I another. Then I would grapple with the foremost and give

him a hard tussle; after that—well, there would be no afterwards for you and me.”

“I wonder they do not do it.”

Ashbridge shook his head.

“It is contrary to their policy; the certainty that the two foremost will fall is enough to prevent the attempt.”

“But it did not do so a short time ago when they were pursuing us.”

“They showed unusual courage, it cannot be denied, but in the rush and tumult they did not have the opportunity to calculate the chance. Besides, after I dropped the first one, the second must have believed there was no cause for fear, since the man who winged him was nowhere in sight.”

“It seems to me,” added Agnes, after another minute or two of thoughtful silence, “that we have forgotten one possibility.”

“What is that?”

“That there may be an avenue of escape in the rear.”

“I declare! I did forget that. You believed you heard the sound of running water. Perhaps you are right.”

He bounded to his feet under the inspiration of the new thought, but instantly checked himself.

"I hesitate to leave you alone on guard, Agnes."

"I do not know why you should do so. If I see any need for your help, you will be notified in time."

"Well, heaven protect us both! I will try it."

Inasmuch as it was out of the power of Ashbridge to make use of a torch, he could only do as did Agnes when attempting her exploration, guide himself solely by the sense of feeling, with perhaps some help later on from the power of hearing.

Acting upon the description received from her, the youth advanced with some assurance for a distance of perhaps fifty feet, when, like her, he put forth the most extreme care and caution. From that point he "inched" forward.

Remembering what she had told him about the sound of falling or running water, he had listened for that from the first. He now heard

it a short distance ahead and to the right. Standing motionless, he did his utmost to locate the precise point whence it came, and the distance it was from him.

“It does not seem more than a rod or two off,” he said to himself, beginning a cautious movement toward the spot; “and since it enters the cavern and leaves it without going out of the mouth, there must be another outlet, which, perhaps—”

Just then, despite the care he used, his foot slipped on the wet surface of the flinty floor, and he tumbled into water that rose half-way to his knees. The shock caused him to emit a suppressed cry, and he narrowly missed letting fall the rifle which was in his left hand. As quickly as he could he scrambled back to the dry rock behind him.

“I got a bath that time for which I was not looking,” he exclaimed; “the water is as cold as ice.”

He had not drank since leaving the block-house, and bending down, he quaffed his fill of the delicious fluid, uttering a sigh of content, as he once more assumed the upright posture.

“There’s one thing certain—whatever befalls us we shall not die of thirst. I must send Agnes here to drink, for I am sure she needs it.”

He was on the point of returning to give her the opportunity, when he decided that, as it was not likely to require much time, he would complete the exploration, so far as the stream was concerned, while the chance offered.

Was it fancy or did he really detect the faintest possible appearance of light at the bottom of the cavern on his right? As he peered intently through the gloom, he suspected it was an optical delusion. His eyes were rooking him in the continued effort to pierce the impenetrable darkness.

But when he looked for a minute or two in another direction, and then brought his gaze back, there was the dull and almost invisible glow, just as when it first attracted his wonderment.

“It is a light,” he exclaimed; “it must come from the outside, but why is it so faint?”

Determined to fathom the mystery, he moved with the utmost caution toward the spot, whose pale glow diminished rather than increased as he advanced. When within a yard or two, despite his care, his feet slipped again, and a second time he stumbled into the icy stream from which he had just drank.

The water was narrower, deeper and with a more rapid flow, but the slight mishap which now befell him resulted in the instant solution of the question that had puzzled him.

The stream, the cause of all this wonderment, found its outlet near at hand. The dim glow which perplexed Ashbridge was the reflection of the sunlight from the outside, which, refracted and obscured by the flow of water, found its way into the interior of the cavern in an almost infinitesimal degree, so that only the keenest vision could perceive it.

The question that flashed upon the youth was, "Can this stream be turned to account?"

It was a momentous question. Cut off almost from every possibility of hope in other directions, he fixed his thoughts upon the

single one that was left to him, and which was faint enough as it was.

The first proceeding of Ashbridge was to learn the depth and breadth of the current. This was not difficult. As nearly as he could ascertain it was about two feet wide and slightly less in depth, sufficient to permit the passage of himself and Agnes, provided the way was open to do so.

The latter was the all-important point to decide, for upon that hung the issue of life and death.

No end of possibilities presented themselves. If the opening into the daylight outside was unobstructed, it was self-evident that, even though it was a dozen feet away, it was a perfect path to safety, for it was as easy to enter the current and glide that distance with it without breathing as it was to walk across the floor of the cavern.

But therein lay the whole momentous problem.

Any error made in the calculation must of necessity be irretrievably fatal. Once started along the flow to the outside world, the most

skilful swimmer could not return. He must go forward to inevitable death or life, as the case might prove. A short turn, a narrowing of the channel, so as to obstruct the onward sweep of the body even for a few seconds, would end everything.

What man possessed of ordinary prudence would run such fearful risk? Well might George Ashbridge stand hesitating, doubting and perplexed as to what he ought to do.

“How shall I determine?” was the mental question, asked over and over again.

Removing his cap, he pushed his head below the surface, as close as possible to the point where the water dipped under the solid rock; but the open eyes could detect no more than when he attempted to use them in the gloom of the cavern. The dim, yellowish reflection remained, but nothing else.

From the fact that only the faintest sound came back to him from the outside, Ashbridge was disposed to form the hopeful conclusion that the sweep of the current was free and unobstructed until it had passed some distance from the cavern.

“And yet it won’t do to err,” he reflected, as he drew his head from the water and replaced his cap. “I am in sore perplexity.”

At that moment a deafening report echoed and resounded through the cavern. A rifle had been discharged at the entrance, and, fearing the worst, the youth made desperate haste to reach Agnes Altman, praying and yet fearful that it was too late to save or help her.

CHAPTER V.

A VOICE FROM THE DARKNESS.

IT was only natural that when Agnes Altman was left alone at the mouth of the cavern she should feel the responsibility of the trust thus placed upon her. The safety not only of herself but the only means of entering or of leaving the refuge was that which they had employed, and it would not do for her to relax her vigilance for one moment.

She had assumed her former easy position at the side of the entrance, where, sitting upon the hard, rough floor, she held her small rifle across her lap, ready to aim and fire it the moment the necessity arose. She was so far back that the only possible means of reaching her with a bullet was from the crest of the opposite bank, always expecting the rush down the path, which she and George had dismissed as improbable so long as daylight lasted.

It followed, therefore, that she kept close ward and watch of that crest just across the chasm, and which was covered with stunted undergrowth and vegetation. The Shawanoe who outwitted her from that point would have to be subtle indeed.

There was a quicker throbbing of the heart, when within the five minutes following the departure of the youth from her side she became convinced that the hostiles were at work again. The same fluttering agitation at the base of the vegetation was hardly noticed when an eagle feather once more rose to view.

“Had George fired when he showed himself before, they would not have dared to repeat the attempt. I am sure this is the same Indian, but he cannot see me.”

Slowly and steadily, like the movement of the shadow around the dial, did the feather rise until the mass of course, black hair was perceptible, but before the low, painted forehead showed the upward motion ceased. The watcher supposed it would be resumed in a few seconds, but it was not.

Puzzled to understand the meaning of this,

Agnes kept her eyes fixed upon the odd picture. There were the feather and the dark basis on which it rested, but the eyes themselves showed not, and inasmuch as she could not see them, it followed that the Indian could not have observed her, even had she been sitting nearer the mouth of the cavern.

But while she was intently studying the sight and waiting for the appearance of the glittering eyes, the shadow of a movement, as it may be called, caught her attention fully a half-dozen feet to the right of where the token showed, as if it were an ornament to the bank itself. Something almost imperceptible stirred the base of a bush, and if no feather appeared, she was certain that among the leaves was a mass of coal black-hair, from the centre of which a pair of eyes, like those of the rattlesnake, glowed upon the mouth of the cavern.

The truth flashed upon the young woman. That which she had first noted was a counterfeit, a dummy to hold the attention and perhaps draw the fire of the sentinel, while the real danger appeared at another point. Had

the pretended head risen a few inches higher the deceit would have been discovered, but the Indian was too cunning thus to reveal the trick. A little more care upon his part and the real head and front would have remained unnoted.

Confident that she herself was invisible, Agnes did not change her position. So long, too, as the Indian contented himself with looking over at the cavern, she was in no danger. If he attempted to bring his rifle around to fire she could readily shift her position and anticipate the action.

The young woman now had it in her power to do a signal service to George Ashbridge and herself. Protected by the gloom of the interior, which came almost to the opening itself, she could drive a bullet through the brain of the peeping Tom, and teach his comrades the fatal peril of trying to steal a march upon them.

But the reader need not be told that nothing of the kind took place. Having protested against such an act on the part of her companion, she could not nerve herself to it

so long as the present necessity did not exist. It may be believed that had the Shawanoe brought his gun around to the front she would have contented herself with insuring her safety by withdrawing a little further within her refuge.

The miscreant, however, did not bring about the test. A few minutes' intense scrutiny showed him no one was on guard, and consequently none that could serve as a target for his marksmanship. It cannot be believed that he suspected the fugitives were not on the alert. Emitting a faint hissing sound, the crown and eyes vanished like the shadow of a cloud.

"George would have been less merciful but perhaps more sensible than I," was the conclusion of Agnes as the strain was lifted.

She shifted her position a few inches nearer the front, for what she had just witnessed caused a fear that some ruse was in contemplation by their enemies. The next moment she uttered an exclamation of surprise.

The end of the pine log, to which reference has been made more than once, came into

view because of the change in her position. Fully a foot of it was in sight. It may be said that there was nothing to cause astonishment in this, but an odd suspicion came over the young woman that the log did not occupy precisely the same position as before.

Why this should be the case was more than she could explain. The air was too calm to suppose that the change of position was due to that cause, and it was altogether improbable that any process of decay going on in the wood could have brought about a shifting of the centre of gravity.

Strong as seemed the argument that the whole thing was an error on her part, Agnes Altman fortunately was too wise to dismiss it from her thought as such. She determined to make herself certain on the point.

Assuming a position that left about a foot of the log in sight, she raised the hammer of her weapon and fixed her gaze upon the wood.

For some minutes it remained as motionless as the rock beside her. Then, with an emotion which possibly may be imagined, she saw it shift silently forward fully six inches!

It was a startling discovery, and left no doubt that one or more Shawanoes were shoving the tree nearer the mouth of the cavern, and doing it with a deft noiselessness that could not have been surpassed.

There might be a dozen different explanations of the alarming manœuvre; it was sufficient to know that it boded evil, and the frightened girl held herself ready for the emergency which she was convinced would come within a few minutes. Had she believed otherwise she would have called Ashbridge to her assistance; but he was at the rear of the cavern and time was too precious.

Suddenly a shadow darkened the opening in front of her. The figure of a gigantic warrior seemed to be projected upward from the bottom of the ravine as the folded napkin was flung aloft, and the crouching miscreant started into the cavern, like the figure cast by the sunlight from the opposite side of the gorge.

But at the first step Agnes fired her weapon without lifting it from her lap. The Shawanoe gave a gasp, but, strange to say, uttered

no outcry, and staggered backward like a drunken man. He continued wabbling to the right and left, and stepping vaguely, until he went out over the ledge like a bundle of rags, emitting a rasping screech as he thumped to the bottom and collapsed, with the last breath of life driven from his body.

The next moment Ashbridge was at her side.

"Heavens! what has taken place, Agnes?"

"It was my gun this time," she replied, with superb mastery of her emotions; "I shot an Indian just as he was entering the cavern."

"I would not have left you had I dreamed anything of the kind could have taken place; what has become of him?"

"He staggered backward and fell into the ravine."

"Then you must have hit him."

"It looks that way."

"Agnes, how proud I am of you!"

And stooping and passing an arm over her shoulder he affectionately touched his lips to her forehead, while she, womanlike, shivered,

burst into tears, and seemed on the point of sinking in a faint.

"Come now," he added, tenderly caressing her; "it is not the first time you have proven yourself as brave a girl as ever lived. Do not spoil it by giving way after the thing is done."

"It was so dreadful, George."

"Not so dreadful as being shot yourself and having me killed by the warrior, for that was his object."

"I'll be myself in a minute," she added, striving bravely to rally.

"You must, for there is no telling how soon your help will be needed. Besides, you have forgotten to reload your gun."

This appeal enabled the young woman to master her temporary weakness. Declining the assistance of her companion, she quickly reloaded her weapon, by which time she was fully herself again.

"I cannot understand the meaning of it," said she inquiringly, as they once more seated themselves beside each other.

"Nor do I; but tell me all that took place while I was away."

She did so, not omitting the slightest particular that has already been made known to the reader.

“I still fail to understand it, either,” he said, when she had finished; “that hissing sound which you heard made by the Shawanoe peering over the edge of the ravine must have been a signal to him on this side that no one was on the watch in the mouth of the cavern. It was another proof of how easily a person may be mistaken.”

“But what could the warrior hope to do by entering as he did? We have taken pains to keep invisible from the time we ran in here, and the failure of the other to see us, therefore, could signify nothing.”

“I repeat I do not understand their action. Probably there were several Indians who meant to rush in after their leader, and would have done so had he succeeded in gaining a foothold. One thing is certain. This party of warriors have a good deal more bravery and daring than is usually seen.”

“How idle for that one to make use of the screen when he could have stolen along the

path to the entrance without my seeing him a moment sooner than I did! In fact I would not have seen him so soon had not the shifting of that log given me warning."

"He could not have suspected that. Suppose there were three or four of them who were pushing behind the log. If you or I ventured out to take a shot they would have flattened themselves behind the screen so as to be safe, while, if they were stealing along the path, they would have been at our mercy. A quick shot at the party in Indian file might have killed several."

"But if there were several who intended to rush in behind the leader, why did they not do so?"

"Because you fired in the nick of time."

"I accept your explanation because there is none better that we can think of, but it does not satisfy me."

"Nor me either; perhaps you can give a better."

"I cannot; let it go as it is, but we need no more proof of the watchfulness of the Shawanoes. They may intend to wait until night

before making a real move against us, but they will throw away no chances in the meantime."

"After all, my hope is that Jethro, even if he did not hear my call to him, may comprehend that the best service he can do us is to hasten to the block-house for help!"

"I would believe that, if I could also believe that the chance would be his."

"And why not?"

"The Shawanoes must have learned long ago that while you and I have taken refuge in this cavern a third party is on the outside. The third party has done enough against them to rouse every feeling of revenge in their nature; he is very near us; indeed, when they threw themselves between us and the block-house, they must have discovered there were three instead of two."

"I can find no flaw in your logic."

"Still further—and that is another thing which I do not understand—Jethro has ventured up the gorge until he stood directly below us, and then flung to us that bundle containing our lunch. Why was he permitted to do that?"

"Sometimes an exploit of that kind succeeds because of its very boldness. The Shawanoes were looking no more for a thing of that nature than were we, and therefore the way was open for Jethro to execute his clever performance. If he had sufficient wit to withdraw immediately afterward and make haste to the block-house, I would take back all that I ever said about his stupidity and be ready to vote him almost the equal of Boone or Kenton; but," added Ashbridge, with a sigh, "the time has not yet come to do so."

"How did you make out with your exploration of the cave?"

"There! how forgetful I am! You have not noticed that my feet are wet. I slipped into the stream of water, which is of goodly size, icy cold, and I have no doubt as clear as crystal. I found where it leaves the cavern, but not where it enters it. I had a good refreshing draught. Aren't you thirsty?"

"I am."

"Feel your way back as you did in the first place, but take particular care that you do not lose your footing as I did. There is one

thought that brings some comfort; after our good lunch this noon we can go several days without food, and shall never want for water. Long before that Captain Bushwick and the rest of them at the block-house will know there is something wrong and make search for us."

"But how will they trace us here?"

"Kenton and Boone have done more remarkable things than that. If there is no rainfall before they begin the hunt, some of them will discover the trail."

"We must not leave Jethro out of the calculation," remarked Agnes, more hopefully than before; "he has already done us good service, and something tells me he will do more before many hours pass."

"But you said you were thirsty," remarked Asbridge, with a gentle reproof in his tones.

She rose to her feet, and since her rifle was only an encumbrance, and might prove of service to Ashbridge, she left it with him. He cautioned her again to have a care to her footsteps, and she vanished within the deeper gloom.

All noises were magnified in the cavern, so that Agnes Altman had penetrated only a short distance when she again caught the soft sound made by flowing water. Bearing in mind the warning of George, she felt her way with so much care that she paused on the margin of the underground stream without wetting her feet.

Here she readily quenched her thirst, but, at the moment of rising again, received a shock that took away her breath. Faintly, but too distinctly to be mistaken, she heard the footsteps of some one moving near her.

"Can it be George or some wild animal?" was the question framed itself in her mind, but which she was powerless to utter.

But the footfalls were so near that she must flee, and something like her natural courage came back to her.

"George!" she called in a gasping whisper, "is that you?"

"No," came a gruff voice; I'se Jethro Juggens, and dat's de fust time I was ever took for Marse George. I 'spose dat am yo', Miss Agnes."

CHAPTER VI.

JETHRO JUGGENS.

ENOUGH has been intimated in the course of this narrative concerning Jethro Juggens for the reader to form a general idea of his movements and doings, as they affected George Ashbridge and Agnes Altman. When the two left the block-house to learn whether the cabins in the clearing had been destroyed by the Shawanoes, the African accompanied them in the threefold capacity of servant, guard and chaperone, if the last term be permissible under the circumstances.

Of Jethro's loyalty and affection for the two there could be no more question than of his extraordinary skill with his rifle. He had given abundant proof of the last during the memorable descent of the Ohio during the preceding summer, and the return to the block-house, when the pioneers were sorely

beset by the Panther and his fierce warriors. That skill had been perfected throughout the months spent at the temporary quarters erected near the block-house, during which he engaged in a number of hunting excursions, and once accompanied Kenton on a scouting expedition into the Wyandotte country. The famous hunter showed a partiality for Jethro, whose marksmanship could not be surpassed by himself nor any other of the other rangers connected with the station.

“Dem folks need looking after,” concluded Jethro, at the opening of the westward jaunt; “when a couple like dem am in love, dar’s no sayin’ what foolish ting dey won’t do, and what danger dey won’t run into—so I’ll shove ahead and keep my eye open for squalls.”

It need not be said that George and Agnes made no objection to being left to themselves on this delightful excursion. Warning the youth to have a care for himself, rather than for them, they allowed him to advance so far along the trail that only at rare intervals did they catch a sight of the honest fellow lumbering heavily forward.

When the point opposite the clearing was attained, the three united and remained together for half an hour. Jethro offered to swim the river and make an examination of the two structures, which in the distance showed no evidence of injury, but Ashbridge would not permit.

“It would do no good and might bring much harm.”

“But how ’bout de satumfaction of knowin’ what I will know?”

The youth shook his head.

“If the return journey is as quiet as our walk here I shall urge father and Mr. Altman to move to the clearing. It is still early enough for us to plant corn and vegetables, and it looks as if we might have made our homes there months ago without danger to any of us. We will now return.”

What befell George and Agnes on that memorable journey back to the fort has already been told. In the hour when neither held a thought of danger they were turned abruptly aside by its appearance, and were now at bay in the cavern, which at the crisis

in their fate opened so providentially before them.

As before, Jethro took the lead, and, walking somewhat faster than usual, placed himself further in advance than was his purpose and further than he suspected.

Now, it was a curious fact that the rugged section in which our friends took refuge was well known to Jethro. In the depth of the previous winter, when hunting deer and bison, he had visited the place and actually entered the cavern, but its gloom repelled him and he remained but a few minutes.

On the return, as he came to the point in the trail nearest the section, he paused and looked back.

“Dem foolish folks am so far off dat I’ll have time to take a look and see if the place am dar still or whether the heathens hab run off wid it. I can come back to the trail behind ’em and give ’em a scare.”

Hardly had he entered the rocky section, when he was startled by hearing the signals which first apprised Ashbridge and Agnes of their peril. Jethro came to an abrupt halt,

frightened for the moment almost out of his wits.

“Dat means trouble!” he muttered; de varmints hab arriv, and the Lawd only knows what’ll become of dem tew; dey’ll be so busy talkin’ dar nonsense to each oder dat dey won’t notice the Ingins till dey slips up and chops off der heads; den it’ll be too late to do ’em no good.”

Jethro was in sore perplexity. He did not know whether to make haste back to the trail to warn his friends, or to seek to learn the extent and nature of the danger which threatened them. One of the alarming signals came from a point so near at hand that he decided to investigate. The result was as remarkable as it was unexpected.

While engaged in this task, the drama opened, Providentially, his position was such that he saw Ashbridge leap the chasm, instantly followed by Agnes and then by the Shawanoe, who was shot while in mid-air.

“It’s ’bout time I mixed in dis bis’ness,” thought Jethro, who within the following

minute winged the second warrior in the manner described.

Up to this time he had not given a thought to his own safety. Circumstances favored him again, as they had so many times in the past. His whole aim was to aid his friends, whose peril was frightful. Wise enough to exercise caution, he hurried by a circuitous route to join them, and was just in time to see both dart into the mouth of the cavern which he remembered so well.

The incident brought vast relief to Jethro.

"Dat's de most discum lucky ting dat could hab happened!" he said, meaning that it was a stroke of marvelous good fortune; "de heathens can't get into dat place 'cept by gwine frough de door dey used, and eberyone dat tries dat will get plugged. De wust ting dat can happen to de folks am dat ob gettin' hungry."

His own keen appetite magnified this affliction and led him to a thing that was more of a sacrifice than many would suspect. He would have enjoyed eating every mouthful in his charge, but he could not do so when

the probability remained of suffering on the part of his friends. They were without the means of obtaining food, while he could not want so long as he retained his rifle.

Jethro would have been unpardonably stupid had he failed to comprehend the personal danger in which he stood. Now that the others had secured temporary safety he could give the fullest attention to himself. He, therefore, made the most cautious withdrawal possible from his position, and still resolved to give all the aid he could to George and Agnes, stole along the bottom of the gorge until directly beneath the entrance to the cavern.

So far as he could tell, this was effected without discovery on the part of the Shawanoes. Scrutinizing the faces of the rocks on both sides of the ravine, he detected no sign of his enemies. This might be the case, however, if a hundred of them were in the vicinity.

Jethro knew the place so well that when he halted he was certain that he stood directly beneath the ledge in front of the cavern

entrance. He could see nothing to guide him, but, weighting the parcel with a stone, deftly flung it upward. As will be remembered, the first effort failed, and he caught the package as it descended. The second effort succeeded.

“Ef dey don’t happen to be on de watch dey’ll smell dem victuals. I know I would, and dey must be as hungry as me. Wonder if any ob de heathen seed me!”

He glanced furtively to the right and left, in front and back, and aloft. If it so happened that any of the red men had observed him his situation would be well nigh hopeless, for, walled in as he was, they could pick him off at their leisure, or, what was more likely, secure his capture without the possibility of escape.

“Dar’s one thing sartin—de bestest place for me to be am somewhar else, so I’ll slip out while I hab de chance—hebens gracious! who hit me?”

Thump! something came down so heavily on the crown of Jethro that he was knocked well nigh senseless. In flinging back the

napkin folded about the lunch, it will be remembered that Ashbridge replaced the stone ballast. He would not have done this could he have foreseen what actually took place: the package dropped squarely on the crown of Jethro, and the stone was at the bottom, so that he received well nigh the full force of it.

But it will be borne in mind, too, that it was the head of the African which received the blow; consequently no real injury resulted.

As he raised his head to learn the extent of the damages, the napkin and its contents rolled off to the ground.

"Tank de Lawd!" he exclaimed; "dar's my dinner, or rather a small part of it."

It was a proof of his discretion that, although ravenously hungry, he did not tarry to eat a mouthful. He was too anxious to get away from the perilous spot.

It must have been that the Shawanoes maintained only a fitful watch of the cavern entrance. Convinced that the fugitives could not escape them while daylight lasted, it was only at intervals that they gave attention to the refuge or formulated some scheme for their

undoing. Upon no other supposition can the fact be explained that not only did Jethro succeed in entering the ravine to the point named, but withdrew therefrom without, so far as was ever known, his action being suspected.

Once at a point of safety, however, he made short work of the food in his charge.

“Qu’ar dat folks neber seem to understand dat I’m a well young man and ain’t done growin’ yet; darfore de victuals dat am necessary for my circuitous dewelopment am a good deal more dan I eber gots, and de ting must be ’tended to when I gots back to the block-house. Howsumeber, I feels a good deal better dan I did afore I felt better.”

Strange that now, when the whole object of Jethro’s heart was to do everything in his power, that the one simple, single method did not present itself to him. All that he need do, as agreed by Ashbridge and his companion, was to hurry to the block-house with the news of their extremity. He could readily reach the station before nightfall, and a half-dozen and probably more rangers would be on

the spot ere the Shawanoes could make any headway against the fugitives.

But to the servant only one method was thought of—that was to stay in the immediate neighborhood and strike whenever the opportunity was offered. He decided to do so.

Climbing carefully out of the gorge at a point nearly a hundred yards distant from the opening of the cavern, he ensconced himself among the bowlders and undergrowth so effectively that, while he could look up the ravine and see both sides of it to a point beyond the fallen log, he had no fear of being observed by any eyes that might be ranging along it.

“De heathen must know dat I’m ’bout,” he muttered after settling into position; “or leastways dey knows dat some one am on de outside of the cavern, which can’t be Marse George or Miss Agnes, ’cause dey am inside, which am darfore me or somebody else, consequently it am me. Dat ere fact bein’ de truf,” continued Jethro, pleased with his own reasoning, “it am also de fact dat dem heathen am lookin’ round to make my ’quaintance, or,

if dey ain't, dey soon will be, or, if dey soon won't be, dey oughter will be, which am jes what I said aforesaid, so I'll keep bofe my eyes wide open for squalls."

It was not long before Jethro received his shaking up. From his coign of observation he detected an object in the ravine below which quickly resolved itself into an Indian warrior moving cautiously toward him. The dusky youth was so well hidden that he was able to watch the buck and to observe his every action without himself being seen.

Of course, he was a stranger to Jethro, though he would not have identified him had they met within the preceding hour.

"He am looking for me," was the decision of the youth, after watching him for a few minutes, "and like 'nough he'll find me onless I runs, which I doesn't intend to do. If he gets into my way dar'll be trouble."

So long as there was but one Indian to deal with Jethro felt little misgiving as to the issue, for the reader will perceive the immense advantage he held over the one he believed to be his pursuer, but though there might be

no others on his trail, there were altogether too many in the vicinity for the youth to feel comfortable over the situation.

“Howsumeber, I’ll wait for him ; mebbe he won’t find me and will turn back while he has a chance to do so. Ef I should run now and he should keep trampin’ after me, he’d be likely to cotch me foul, but he can’t do it now.”

It must be admitted that Jethro was shrewd in this matter, which simply was a decision not to surrender the upper hand he held, until it was clearly safe to do so.

Meanwhile, the Shawanoe was advancing steadily toward the base of the cliff where the youth had perched himself. As he stole forward, the warrior, like all his people, seemed “shod with silence.” He was dressed as already described, his black hair dangling about his hideously-painted face, his head was thrown forward, he carried a rifle in a trailing position in his left hand, and his black eyes flitted from side to side and in every direction, as though he did not intend that the slightest object should escape him. More

than once, Jethro believed the savage had detected him, even though he could not have been more perfectly hidden.

“Ef he does cotch sight ob me, he can’t shoot fust,” was the comforting conclusion of the youth perched among the rocks above the Indian. The rifle, which Jethro knew how to use so well, was extended along the top of the boulder, with the muzzle so pointed that only a slight change of direction was required to make the aim fatal.

The strained situation lasted much less than the time we have taken in the telling. The progress of the Shawanoe soon brought him to the foot of the rocks and boulders, up which Jethro Juggens had made his way. At this part of the ravine, the ascent was not perpendicular, but at so moderate a slope that he never lost sight of the buck.

“I’ll wait till he starts up after me; de fust step he takes I’ll plug him; no use ob firin’ till I’m sartin.”

It cannot be supposed that that particular Shawanoe ever comprehended how close he stood to death on that balmy afternoon of a

summer day a long time ago. Everything indicated that his intention was to make his way up among the rocks directly after Jethro, though whether he had actually discovered his footprints is uncertain.

The fugitive raised the hammer of his rifle and pointed the barrel, so that he had only to press the trigger to check the career of the Indian forever. Whether at that critical moment some faint signal caught his ear or the change of intention was natural cannot be known, but, with only a momentary pause, he noiselessly turned about and began retracing his way over his own trail in the same manner that he had advanced over it.

"I guess yo' don't amount to nuffin," muttered Jethro, who lost no time in leaving the place of so much danger.

Still actuated by the one wish of doing something to aid his friends, and still oblivious of the single simple act that would give aid, he now began working over an extended circle, which brought him to a point that may be described as on the upper side of the cavern—that is, that portion furthest removed

from the main trail the three had used in coming from the block-house.

He stopped beside a narrow, clear, swiftly-running stream, struck by the fact that only a few paces away it narrowed and deepened still more and disappeared under the rocks. A brilliant thought flashed upon him."

"I bleve dat runs into de cave whar Marse George and Miss Agnes am! I'll soon find out."

And what did the fellow do but, clasping his gun close to his side so as to prevent its interference with his progress, trust himself wholly to the current. It is hard to conceive of a more reckless act, and yet within the same moment that it was attempted it did the same thing he expected it to do—that is, carried him into the presence of George Ashbridge and Agnes Altman.

CHAPTER VII.

"HERE GOES!"

A MORE foolhardy act than that of Jethro Juggens cannot be conceived. Not one man in a thousand would have attempted it, and it may be doubted whether the youth himself would have made the venture had he held it under consideration for ten minutes.

He had little warrant for believing that the stream opened into the cavern. Every probability pointed to its losing itself under ground among the rocks, in which event certain death awaited him. If the passage was long, or if any obstruction checked his progress, he must be instantly drowned. It would be impossible for him to return even for a short distance, and every one knows how quickly a person is suffocated under water.

And yet, as the reader has learned, the daring effort was followed by perfect success. It

seemed but a twinkling, after being swept into the very blackness of darkness, that he threw up his head, and, instead of striking the rocky wall which touched the surface of the stream for several feet from the outer side, found his face was in the clear air. A quick, vigorous movement, which called forth all his immense strength, and he stood upon his feet and stepped clear of the icy current upon a firm foundation of rock.

“Dat war a piece ob big luck,” was his truthful conclusion; “I wouldn’t like to try it agin. Wonder whar de folks am.”

He waited a few minutes until he could gather his wits and pull himself together. He had emerged from the stream with such deftness that the slight sound had not reached Agnes Altman, standing a short way off. Seemingly at a long distance he could make out an irregular circle of dim light, which he rightly judged to be the opening through which his friends had entered the cavern. He began groping his way thither, and had not gone far when the affrighted maiden called out and he answered.

"Why, Jethro," she added, "I never was so startled in all my life."

"Kind ob scared me at fust, too."

"Where in the name of all that is wonderful did you come from?"

"I come frough de rocks," was his reply, always disposed to magnify his exploits after they were done.

"But how? What do you mean? How could you come through the rocks?"

"I swum under 'em; I tought dat dat stream run into dis place, so I slapped myself down into it, and here I am!"

"I never knew anything like it."

"Can't say dat I done eber heerd anyting quite so smart myself; wonder what Marse George will say?"

"He will be as much astonished as I; let us go to him."

"What war yo' doin', Miss Agnes, so fer from him?"

"I was thirsty and came back here for a drink."

"Did you got it?"

"Yes, before I heard your footsteps."

"Golly! I won't want anoder drink for a week. I guess I must hab swollered 'bout a hundred barrels ob water."

As may be supposed, Ashbridge was overwhelmed with amazement when he was joined a few minutes later by Agnes and the dripping Jethro, and learned the means by which he had entered the cavern.

"You have done something, Jethro," said he, surveying in wonderment the faithful African as revealed in the obscurity.

"Wal, dat's my style," complacently remarked the servant, who naturally felt proud over his achievement. Ashbridge saw the weakness of the fellow and dexterously parried his own words with the addenda:

"You succeeded, it is true, but you had no right to expect success. You have done a good many foolish things in your life, but this is a good deal ahead of them. I would like to say you were brave and wise, and all that, but I cannot."

"I done it for yo' and Miss Agnes," remarked Jethro, so grieved that he was forced to swallow the lump that rose in his throat.

Both Ashbridge and the young woman were touched, and the former hastened to add:

"I feel that, Jethro, and thank you more than I can tell. We have never doubted your devotion to us; you have given too many proofs of your affection and bravery."

"You got de lunch all right?" broke in the servant, evidently determined that they should appreciate all their obligations to him.

"Yes—that was another act of thoughtfulness on your part; and did you get that which we tossed down the ravine to you?"

"Sartinly; got it slap bang on top of my head."

"Did you hear me call to you?"

"What did yo' say?"

"I told you to hurry to the block-house and bring help to us."

"I didn't cotch a word dat yo' said; yo' didn't holler loud 'nough."

"I called loud enough for you to have heard me if you had been there."

"Dat was it; I warn't dar."

"Jethro," continued Ashbridge with a

touch of impatience, "you have made a great mistake."

"What dat?"

"Instead of running this risk of entering the cave, you ought to have made all haste to the block-house; why didn't you do so?"

"'Clar, Marse George, I didn't tink ob it; seemed to me dat when a man am in trouble de only ting to do am to stick to him."

"That may be best as a rule, but it was the worst course for you to follow for us. If you had done as I wished, you would have been at the block-house by this time, and the captain and some of the men would have been on their way to our help."

Jethro was impressed by the words of Ashbridge. He saw the lamentable error he had committed and regretted it as keenly as his friends. The kind-hearted Agnes spoke gently.

"We cannot blame Jethro because he made a mistake, for we made a much greater one when we left home. We did the best we could and he did the same, and I see little difference in the result."

"I did not mean to hurt your feelings, Jethro," said Ashbridge in a kinder tone, but the disappointment is bitter."

The servant was sitting slightly further in the cave than the others, and in the obscurity his dusky face was hardly visible. He was reclining on his elbow, his eyes resting on nothing in particular, and his thoughts, so airy and self-complacent before, became of the most melancholy nature. The sigh which he heaved was heard by George and Agnes, and deepened their pity.

"Dar's one ting sartin," suddenly added Jethro, rousing up and assuming a sitting position, "Bein' as I come into de cavern by de rear doah, I's gwine to lebe it by de same doah."

"What do you mean?" asked the astonished Ashbridge.

"Just what I said! I's gwine to de block-house if I can got dar."

"Impossible! you can not make your way against the current for even so short a distance; it will be certain death."

"Who said I was gwine to do dat? Ef de

stream comes into de cavern it must go out agin, for if it didn't it would fill up de place or else run out by de front way, which it don't do; darfore it has some oder way ob gwine out, and dat's de way I'm gwine to took."

The fellow spoke with so much earnestness that both Ashbridge and Agnes saw they must interfere.

"But you know nothing of the outlet, Jethro," said the young woman.

"What ob dat? I didn't know nuffin ob the inlet either; I've got to find out how it am; it am likely dat it am all right, but I must take de chances, and I'm ready to do dat."

"The chances are that everything is wrong, and that if you attempt to reach the open air you will be drowned."

"Can't help dat," was the dogged response; "I'se gwine to try it."

And he rose to his feet, Ashbridge doing the same, while Agnes looked up at the two in distress.

"Jethro," she said, as she, too, arose and gently placed her hand on his powerful arm;

"we can't let you give your life for us, for that is what it will be."

"I'm ready to do it any time, Miss Agnes; I'll go frough fire and water for yo', and I'm ready to be drowned if nessumsary."

"But it isn't necessary," she persisted with all possible earnestness; "how can it help us for you to drown yourself? That will do us no good and you all possible harm; we can never consent to it."

"Marse George," persisted the negro, who could be stubborn when he chose, "yo'll own dat dar's one chance in a tousand dat I'll go frough all right, and dat's de chance I'm gwine to take."

"I won't own that even that chance exists."

"It don't make no difference; if dar warnt no chance at all," was the original remark of Jethro Juggens, "I would take it. After makin' de big mistake that I done make, and hurtin' yo' feelings in dat dishameful style, Ise gwine to show dat I lubs yo'."

"Jethro, we have never doubted it," Agnes hastened to say, with her hand still resting upon the brawny arm; prove once more that

you love us by doing what we ask you to do, which is to give up the wild idea that has entered your head. We cannot allow you to try such a wild, mad scheme, which offers no hope at all. You must give it up."

It was useless. To Jethro it was the question of life and death, and in the crisis he could know but one guide, his own conviction of duty, and that was immovable.

"Marse George, yo' and me neber had a quarrel, and don't let us hab it now. Ise allers tried to do what's right, and dat's what I'm gwine to do now—let's go back and hab a look at de place," he added, as if a doubt about the wisdom of his course had just risen in his mind.

Ashbridge turned toward Agnes.

"I can't refuse to humor him; it won't do for us both to go; will you remain here on guard?"

"Yes; but you have not told me whether you saw anything to alarm you while I was gone?"

"I saw nothing. The only place that I could observe clearly is the top of the ravine

on the other side. Not the slightest evidence of the Shawanoes appeared."

"Do you need your gun?"

"No; I will leave it with you. I hope no occasion will arise for your using either. I do not think there will. The afternoon is passing, and I am confident the Indians intend to wait for darkness."

"Yo' had better take my gun, too, Miss Agnes," said Jethro, extending his weapon toward her; "it'll be only a bodder to me."

"I shall do nothing of the kind," she replied, spiritedly; "you would be in a sad plight if you succeeded in leaving the cavern and had no weapon with you."

The servant did not insist upon his point. He felt, perhaps, that his defiance had been carried to the breaking point.

"Come on, then," added Ashbridge in a low voice, hoping that the means would present itself for preventing the suicidal attempt of the servant.

Agnes would not say good-bye to the honest fellow, for that would have seemed like an

approval of his scheme, but her heart was heavy and oppressed when she looked after the two figures that were quickly swallowed up in the gloom of the cavern.

It was necessary for Ashbridge and Jethro to feel their way as they advanced, and the former took the lead. Neither spoke as they pushed forward foot by foot, though in the deep gloom and with the roughness of the floor both stumbled more than once.

But George Ashbridge was thinking intently. He had begun to ask himself the question, "Is it possible for Jethro to succeed? Inasmuch as he entered the cavern without danger or difficulty, can it not be that the same amazing good fortune will attend the effort to leave?"

So far as he could judge there was absolutely no hope for Agnes, Jethro and himself except for the means which, when first proposed, caused a shock to him and the young woman. It was not to be supposed that the Shawanoes would give them the slightest opportunity to leave the refuge by the path used in entering it. To do so would

compel them to step over the log and pick their course along the narrow ledge to the elevated ground above. The moment they came out of the cavern, while daylight continued, they would be at the mercy of the red men, who could shoot them down at their leisure. If they waited until night they were certain to walk into the arms of the waiting warriors above.

Ashbridge had not forgotten one significant fact. When he first discovered the stream which entered and left the cavern at the rear he caught the dull, almost imperceptible glow of light, which proved that it was but a short distance to the outside. This being the case, was it a violent supposition that for that short space the course was sufficiently clear for the current to sweep a person safely into the outer air?

"I would not make the venture except in the last extremity," he reflected, "for the risk is fearful, but I would do so if the Indians were entering the mouth of the cave, and is not this the last extremity?"

He was arguing with his conscience, as may

be said, and striving to convince himself that it was no wrong to permit Jethro to carry out his resolution. If he did not quite succeed in doing so he found some consolation in the knowledge that, no matter how strenuous might be his opposition, he could not swerve the dusky youth from his purpose.

At last they paused at the margin of the little stream.

“De fust ting to do,” said Jethro, “am to find whar dis young ribber bobs under de rocks agin.”

“It is not far off, for the cavern is narrow in this place.”

The servant was to the right of Ashbridge and groped his way with no little skill, the other following him as best he could.

“Helloa! what’s dat?” demanded Jethro, stopping abruptly.

Ashbridge knew to what he referred; he had caught the faint, dull glow where the stream swept under the outer walls—a glow which could have only one source, the sunlight in the forest outside.

Jethro read its meaning aright.

"Dat's lucky! it can't be far to the outside."

Ashbridge was silent for a moment. Then he asked :

"Will you not give up the scheme? Will you not do so for the sake of Agnes and myself?"

"It's for de sake ob Agnes and yo'self dat I'm gwine to do it, or leastways to try to do it. So don't say nuffin mo'. Now, if I goes frough all right, Marse George, what den?"

"She and I will try it; but how shall we know you have succeeded?"

Evidently Jethro had been thinking of this, for he made instant answer :

"I'll stole 'round in front ob de ledge whar yo' and Agnes come into de place. When yo' hears a stone drap onto de rocks jes' whar de lunch fell, dat'll mean dat Jethro frowed it, and darfore he am all right."

"That will be a dangerous thing for you to do."

"Am dar anyting we can do dat ain't dangerous?" was the pertinent inquiry of the African.

“Nothing.”

“All right; here goes.”

A minute later George Ashbridge comprehended that he was alone.

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CHAPTER VIII.

SMOKE AND FIRE.

JETHRO JUGGENS had cast the die, and George Ashbridge stood in the darkness alone. He had heard the disturbance of the waters caused by the action of the devoted servant, and his name, pronounced in a last desperate protest, received no response, for it was unheard.

The youth bent his head and listened and looked in the hope of hearing or seeing something which would make known the fate of Jethro, for, whatever it was, that fate decided in a very few seconds. There seemed to be a darkening of the pale glow, he fancied he heard some disturbance in the current, and then he thrust his head beneath the surface that he might hear better.

Had he done this a moment sooner, some

knowledge, amounting to a clue, might have come to him, but he was a trifle too late to learn anything, and he straightened up with a feeling of depression as profound as that which came over Agnes Altman when she watched the two disappear in the gloom of the cavern.

“I did what I could to restrain him,” said the youth, “except to use force. Even that would have proved useless, for there is no man at the block-house as strong as Jethro. He would have flung me aside as though I was a child. No; I cannot blame myself in the matter.”

The self-justification seemed warranted, though it did not relieve the gloom which Agnes noticed when he rejoined her.

“Has anything occurred to alarm you while I was away?” he asked with a sigh.

“Nothing worth the mention.”

“That answer admits that something has taken place which I ought to know.”

“One of the Shawanoes peered over the edge of the bank just as he did when you left me here before.”

"You made sure it was no trick they were trying to play upon us?"

"It could not have been, for I plainly saw the warrior's eyes, and saw him, too, glance up and down the ravine as if searching for something."

"No doubt that was what he was doing. If I had been in your place, Agnes, I would have shot him."

She shuddered.

"I can do that only when it must be done. I have had such a woeful experience since leaving our home in Virginia last summer that it will haunt me all my life. Do not ask me to do what I can possibly avoid doing."

"Every Indian picked off makes one less for us to contend against when the final struggle comes," was the suggestive comment of the youth.

"A half-dozen more or less can make no difference. There must be a score of them in this neighborhood, and every one who falls through us adds to their store of revenge piled up against you and me."

"That was so great before a shot was fired

that it cannot be added to. A Shawanoe always keeps a supply on hand wherever a pale-face is concerned."

"George," said Agnes, after a moment's thought, "it seems to me we made one omission which might have helped in this business had we thought of it in time."

"And what can that be?"

"We should have managed by some means to let the Shawanoes know that Jethro was in the cavern. He might have shown himself for an instant. Then they would have believed us to be stronger than we are now, and believing, too, that he was with us, would not look for him on the outside."

"How would they account for his presence here?"

"They would think he had entered before us."

"It is a good idea, and it is a pity we did not think of it, but it is too late now. The attempt is over, and heaven only knows the result."

"Was there no way by which you could tell whether he made the underground passage in safety?"

“What way could there be?”

“You tell me that you could see the glow of the sunlight in the water that came from the outside. That proves the distance to be short.”

“It can only be a few feet.”

“Then, had he succeeded, what was to prevent his making some signal that you could have heard? He might have whistled or struck a stone against the outer rock. The space is so brief it must have reached you.”

Ashbridge uttered an exclamation of impatience.

“Why did you not walk back with Jethro? You have more wit than we together. The device is so simple that it is a wonder to me that both of us, with all our stupidity, failed to think of it.”

“It did not occur to me until after you were gone, and then,” naively added Agnes, “I was certain you would think of it.”

“So would any one except us.”

“What method did you agree upon?”

“If Jethro succeeds (and I have little hope that he will,) he is to steal down the ravine

until in front, when he will fling a stone upon the ledge, as he did with our lunch, some hours ago."

"You know the great danger of that. We can not understand how he escaped discovery before. He surely will not be able to do so again."

"He may be wise enough to wait until dark."

"That is not his way of doing things. Besides, if the Shawanoes are making ready to capture or destroy us, they will be more on the alert than ever, with the coming of night, and must discover him."

"But if he succeeds in apprising us, and he will find some means of doing so, if he is alive, the way will be open for us all the same."

"Suppose we receive no signal from him, what then?"

"I cannot answer. If it was folly for him to make the venture when the issue was uncertain, how much greater folly for us to undertake it, when failure is inevitable!"

"We will not undertake it, George."

"What shall we do?"

“Make the best efforts we can to keep the Shawanoes from entering the cavern until—until—”

“Until what?”

“The folks at home will soon begin wondering at our absence. The afternoon is far along; they will not wait many hours ere they begin a search for us, and before another day passes, they will learn where we are.”

The conversation thus went on, while the long summer afternoon slowly wore away. Having plighted their troth months before, George Ashbridge and Agnes Altman were drawn nearer each other in these solemn moments when the shadow of death hovered over both. He was now in his twenty-first year and she in her nineteenth. The parents had consented that the wedding should take place when peace came to that part of the frontier—a peace that would permit all to move to the clearing, from which they had been turned back the previous summer, on the day that they considered their perils and privations at an end.

What wonder, therefore, that the hearts of

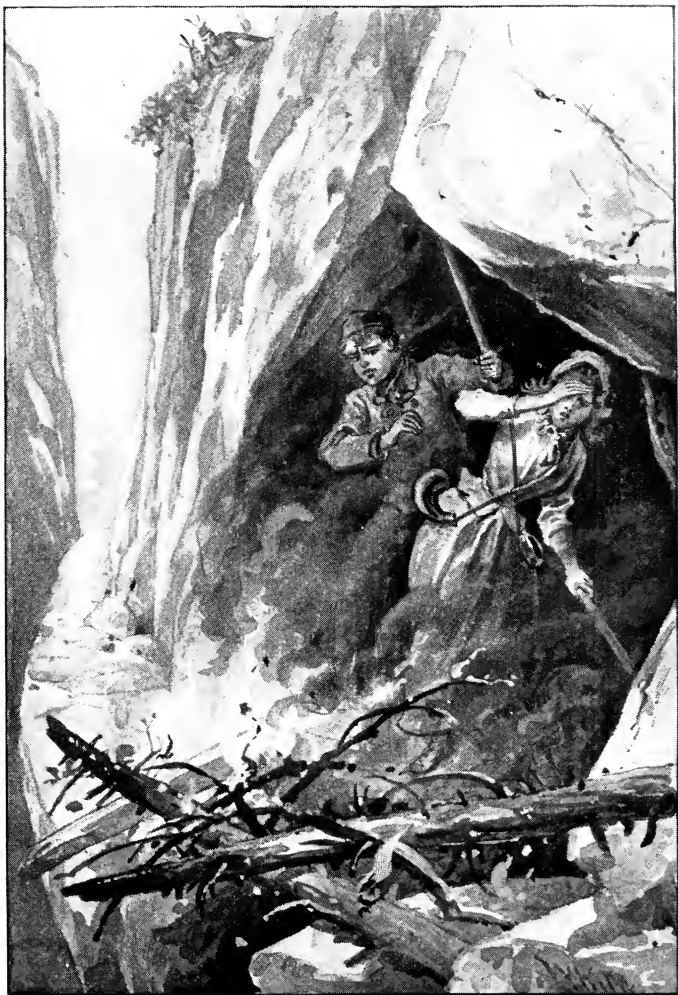
the two were buoyant with hope when they discovered the two cabins standing just as they had been left nearly a year before? It had already been planned that their home should be erected on a portion of the fertile spot yet remaining to be cleared.

Naught had yet come between the happy lovers in that sweet long ago when the skies were radiant and the bow of promise spanned the future—naught but this peril, which they felt was graver than any that had environed them before, though, as the reader will recall, it had been more than once of the gravest nature.

“Look!”

The gloom of night was stealing through the woods and into the ravine when Agnes Altman, seated beside her lover, impulsively caught his arm and pointed to the entrance of the cavern a few paces in front of them.

He had seen it at the same moment. A limb, large in size, and decayed to the dryness of tinder, dropped from the rocks above and lodged at the mouth of the cavern. It was ablaze and the short, swift descent fanned



BESIEGED.

the blaze, so that it crackled and burned fiercely as it lay but a few feet distant.

When the branch was one mass of fire, whose heat was plainly felt by the two, another dropped from aloft, quickly followed by another and another until the entrance was half filled with the burning stuff. Several of the sticks were so ill-aimed that they tumbled over the ledge into the ravine before they became ignited, but most of them remained and speedily caught fire.

"What is the meaning of that," asked the alarmed Agnes.

"They are trying to burn us out."

"The cavern is too large for them to do that."

"They have succeeded already in making it uncomfortable," remarked Ashbridge, punctuating his words with a cough, in which he was speedily imitated by his companion.

The heavy smoke, instead of sweeping outward, seemed to be carried within the cavern, tainting the air so that the two were quickly compelled to shift their position further inward.

"We should do it anyway," explained Ashbridge, "for the increased light would show us to the Shawanoes, who are on the watch from the other side."

As if to emphasize his words, a rifle cracked from the point referred to and the quick whizz of the bullet was plainly heard as it sped between the two and lost itself in the darkness beyond.

The report hastened their footsteps, and they quickly took position where they could command the opening, and escape all danger of being seen.

Thump, crash, the fuel continued to fall, until it looked as if the entrance would be completely choked.

"One thing is certain," observed Agnes, prompt to recover her superb poise and courage, "so long as that goes on the Shawanoes themselves cannot enter."

"I am not so sure of that; the wall of fire is so narrow that there would be little danger in their leaping through it."

"If they did so they would enter an atmosphere which they are striving to make un-

bearable for us. Can it be they expect to suffocate us?"

"I don't know what other object they can have. Their actions show they have little knowledge of the extent of this place. Gracious! I had no thought that the smoke would penetrate so far," exclaimed the youth, who varied his coughing with a violent fit of sneezing.

The discomfort increasing, the friends had but one recourse, to push further within, thus securing at least temporary relief. The bonfire burned vigorously and continued to be fed from the invisible source. The reflection against the wall of rock on the opposite side of the ravine brought it into as vivid sight as at noonday. Every depression and projection, the twists of vine extended irregularly across it, the lumps of dirt on the upper edge, the little gnarled roots of the bushes, which leaned over as if about to fall into the gorge, and even a tiny serpent, which, loosing its hold, tumbled dangling and looping and writhing—all these were seen with a distinctness which could not have been clearer or plainer to the sight.

The Shawanoes displayed characteristic cunning in their work. When the fire had continued long enough to furnish a considerable bed of coals they flung down greener limbs. These burned more slowly and sent up a thicker volume of smoke, which, with the same perversity as at first, swept into the cavern, although it was not known that there was an outlet by which a current of air could be created.

The situation of the two steadily increased in discomfort. It was as if the heavy vapor persistently sought out their every refuge. It caused their eyes and throats to smart and kept them sneezing and coughing continually.

"It is easier to breathe near the floor," said Ashbridge, who, having retreated some distance, sat down again; "the smoke naturally rises."

Agnes had noted the fact and availed herself of it. They were now fully a dozen yards from the opening, and hoped they would be able to remain without retreating further. The Shawanoes had ceased, at least for the time, to fling down wood upon the

flame, and the distance and obscurity caused by the vapor rendered the view of the opposite wall indistinct.

"If any of them could steal up in front of the flames he would certainly be able to see us, even at this distance," remarked Ashbridge.

"But would himself be more distinctly seen by us," suggested Agnes.

"Can it be they are through with trying to smother us? There has been no new fuel thrown down for some time, and night is fully come."

"If they really meant to smoke us to death, how will they know whether they have succeeded?"

"Enter the cavern and investigate," suggested the youth.

"They would not have to hunt long before finding us—George, I thought I saw something pass in front of the flames just then, but it moved so quickly that I couldn't make out what it was."

"I didn't observe it; we will watch for it again."

By this time the wood had burned to that extent that most of the smoke was dissipated, and it was easy to see the gray rocks on the further side of the gorge. The remark of the young woman concentrated the attention of both on the point where she had caught the flitting glimpse of an object she could not identify.

"Well, by gracious!" exclaimed Ashbridge; "I forgot about that! You saw it, Agnes, that time?"

"Yes; it was a stone."

"That, and nothing else! Can it be possible? Yes; it must be true; Jethro did reach the outside by the underground passage; he flung that stone up as a signal that he is all right. It seems like a miracle, yet it may be true. I can hardly credit my senses."

"Heaven has not deserted us!" was the reverent response of Agnes; "this means everything to us, George."

She had risen to her feet, and paid no heed to the murky vapor which stole into every crevice in the cavern and rendered their discomfort almost intolerable.

Her companion was hardly a moment behind her, and no less excited than she. For more than an hour each had forborne all reference to Jethro Juggens, because they believed him dead. On the contrary, he was very much alive.

"I hope he will rest satisfied with the last notice," said George, "for he must have run much personal risk, with such a bright light in the ravine."

"Had he been content with his first attempt this afternoon we would have received no lunch, nor would we have identified the signal meant to tell us he was safe on the outside."

The two waited some minutes, intently watching the illuminated space around the opening of the cavern, but the keenest scrutiny detected nothing. It must have been that Jethro failed to lodge the stone on the ledge at first, and made a second throw.

"Now let us lose no time in following him," whispered Agnes; "I have a dread that the Shawanoes will attempt something else against which we shall be helpless."

“I have no idea what it can be.”

“Nor have I, nor do I care to know; come on.”

She took the lead, walking more rapidly than seemed prudent to her companion; but the space to the stream was short and was quickly passed.

“This must be the spot where you saw the light from the outside,” added Agnes, whose sense of touch apprised her that they were at the point where the water dipped under the rocks.

“You are right; here is where we must make the final venture, and—who shall go first, Agnes? You or I?”

CHAPTER IX.

THROUGH THE FOREST.

GEORGE ASHBRIDGE and Agnes Altman stood on the bank of the little underground stream, in utter darkness, debating as to who should first make the critical plunge.

He had already decided, before asking the question, that he should take precedence. Despite the success that had marked both efforts of Jethro Juggens, he was convinced that the venture was attended by all the peril conceivable. Fate seemed to have selected the African youth as the special favorite of fortune, for good luck had gone with him time and again where an experienced ranger like Simon Kenton or Daniel Boone would have recoiled in dismay.

Several times Ashbridge had asked himself whether it was not possible to change the course of the stream for a brief time, as as to

leave the channel partially empty. If that could be done, it would give them the chance to grope their way to the outside more at leisure and without risk, with the opportunity of returning to the cavern in the event of failure.

But no means were at command for the experiment. The stream, in the course of many ages, had worn a deep channel for itself, rendering a complete damming necessary to throw its volume out of alignment. He had been unable to find any soil or loose rocks with which to build such an obstruction, and the project, therefore, was dismissed from his mind.

"God help her if I venture and fail!" was his prayer as he put the question to her. She answered, with a calmness that surprised him:

"I do not see that it makes any difference; each has to try it, and we cannot go together; suppose I lead?"

"With your permission I will act as guide," he remarked, assuming all the indifference possible. "If the opening is so near, I may be able to call back some directions that will assist you."

"As you prefer; but I think you had bet-

ter not try to do so. Some of the Indians may be so near that they will hear you. I have had so little experience in swimming underground or below the water that I couldn't follow your instructions, no matter how simple, even if I heard them."

"Let me relieve you of your rifle."

"I cannot permit that; you will have enough work to manage your own; I can handle mine as well as you; why wait any longer, George?"

His heart was beating tumultuously. The fear was strong upon him that this might be their eternal separation, and he longed to press her to his heart and tell her again how he loved her more than all the world beside; but to do that would unnerve her, and might bring about the very catastrophe he dreaded with an unspeakable dread.

So with an effort almost superhuman he restrained the words that trembled on his lips and forced himself to say, with seeming cheeriness:

"Since we expect to be together so soon, I will not say 'Good-bye.' Jethro made the voyage head foremost, and I will try the same

method. Here goes!" he added, repeating the words that were used by Jethro Juggens upon parting with him.

"Heaven be with you!" was all that Agnes had time to say when her companion vanished, and she knew she was alone.

A strange hesitancy took possession of her. She recalled with dismay that she had not asked Ashbridge to signal to her as soon as he effected the passage. She had reproved him for not arranging something of the nature with Jethro Juggens, and then had forgotten to do so when placed in the same situation.

"But it was not necessary," she made herself believe; "he may not call to me, for I warned him against that, but he will think to knock on the rock outside, and I will be sure to hear him. It is time he did so."

The seconds seemed minutes in her intense anxiety, but the passage of necessity must be finished almost as soon as begun. Why should he keep her waiting for an instant even?

With a coolness beyond her power to explain, she stooped down and held her hand in the water.

"It flows fast," she reflected; "If anything happens to George, and his way is obstructed, the stream will instantly rise; I can not see that it does; he must have gone through without trouble."

She straightened up again to prepare for the ordeal. There was really little if any preparation to make; all she had to do was to lie down in the icy current and trust herself to Providence.

But she lingered, not from any shrinking because of the trial, but that she might hear the longed-for signal from Ashbridge. She yearned to know that all had gone well with him.

She had fully resolved on the venture, no matter what the issue to him.

"If he has been drowned then I wish to be drowned, too," was the yearning prayer of her heart.

Still the signal did not come.

She looked toward the mouth of the cavern. The fire was still burning, and with a brighter glow than when she last noted it. The Shawanoes had flung down more fuel from the tops

of the rocks, and the heavy smoke was again rolling toward her and stealing into every nook and crevice. Once she fancied she detected the figure of a warrior that had bounded through the wall of fire and was hastening toward her. But if she really saw the fearsome sight it did not cause an additional heart throb or awaken interest. Long before the intruder could reach her her own fate would be decided.

She roused herself to wait no longer.

She modified the plan adopted by Jethro and George. She naturally recoiled from shooting down the stream head foremost. It was not only repulsive to her sense of propriety, but seemed more dangerous. A slight obstruction, not sufficient to check her progress, but possibly to change her course to a slight extent, might be more safely struck with the feet than with the head. In the latter case a partial stunning was almost inevitable, with serious consequences certain.

Agnes stood erect in the current, which flowed swiftly about the lower part of her limbs. Then, clasping her rifle close to her

body in front, with the muzzle before her face and the stock at her knees, sank slowly downward on her back.

While doing so she murmured the prayer :

“O, God, take care of me ; whatever the fate of George let that be mine.”

Before she raised her feet the current assumed control of her. She closed her eyes, set her lips and resigned herself to the will of heaven. Then she seemed to be rushing, not horizonitally, but downward toward the centre of the earth. It was as if she were in a foundering vessel that was sinking miles and miles to the bottom of the ocean. It appeared as if the awful journey would never end.

Through it all she retained the mastery of her senses. She resolutely held her breath, well aware of the consequences of any attempt to breathe, while the water was on all sides and above her. She made no effort to help herself, for that was beyond her power. She felt her right elbow rub against the rock at her side, but the contact was slight and only for an instant. One of her feet struck something with more force, but she was not sensi-

ble of any injury, and it instantly freed itself. The water was like the clasp of death, but in her exaltation she paid no heed. It seemed all a gruesome dream; and, as the events of a lifetime may be concentrated in a few seconds of sleep, so this strange experience of Agnes Altman, seeming of intolerable length, was begun and ended, as may be said, in a twinkling.

The next startling sensation was that some monster had seized her in his arms and was about to devour her.

“Speak, darling, Agnes, it is I! Are you hurt? What has happened to you?”

“Thank heaven! thank heaven! Nothing has happened to me, George! I am unhurt; do you thank God, too?”

“I do,” was the fervent offering of the youth, who had kept his place in the middle of the current that by no possibility she might pass him in the darkness, which was now almost as profound as within the cavern itself. He could see nothing, but the instant her feet touched him he stooped and caught her, and stepped upon the dry rock at his side.

“Are you injured, or hurt in any way?” he eagerly asked, after the first explanations had passed between them.

“Not in the least,” she replied, quick to recover herself.

The garments of both were saturated. Agnes passed her gun to Ashbridge, and drawing out her handkerchief from her pocket, wrung it as nearly dry as she could, and used it to clear the water from her face and eyes. Hat, clothing, shoes, stockings, everything were as wet as could be—what of that? Had not both made the perilous passage in safety, and that, too, when neither felt scarcely a hope of doing so?

A curious feature of the underground passage of the three friends was that the most difficulty and danger was encountered by Jethro Juggens and the least by Agnes Altman. The young men, as will be remembered, took the plunge “head on.” The African’s crown struck a projection at the side of the cavern with such force that he was stunned, and escaped drowning by a hair’s breadth. He was confused and helpless for the moment, but the

force of the current swept him forward, and by a desperate rally he recovered himself and clambered to his feet.

It was not so bad with Ashbridge, though there came an awful moment when, with the breathless buzzing, spinning, whirring in his ears, all became a blankness of darkness, and he felt himself in the grasp of the dark angel and borne toward the terrible beyond.

It has been explained that nothing of the kind was experienced by Agnes Altman. Had her predecessors adopted her method they undoubtedly would have received less rough treatment. She clung fast to her rifle, kept her skirts gathered as closely as possible about her feet, and, since the distance was really less than she supposed, was in actual peril but a few seconds.

Naturally it was several minutes before the two fully rallied. They were standing in the woods, with rocks, bowlders and bushes around them, and such dense vegetation overhead that not a ray of the faint moonlight reached them. They could find no more use for their eyes than when in the cavern ; indeed, not so much,

for there the illumination of the burning wood was of some help to the vision.

“George,” said his companion, with the natural buoyancy of youth and awakened hope, “my clothing feels as if it is damp.”

“I have noticed something of the same kind about mine; we must have exposed ourselves to the wet.”

“I didn’t hear your signal to me.”

“I didn’t signal.”

“Why not?”

“Well, I expected you to follow without a minute’s delay, and was afraid that if I stepped from the stream I might lose you. You could shoot past without my seeing you. I am quite sure this stream makes another dive among the rocks, and if either of us were caught in it there would be no escape.”

“I dreaded that something had befallen you, and you had been killed. I never was in greater torture in so brief a time. The deliverance has been so sudden, so complete, that it is hard to realize it. Have you any idea of where we are?”

“Very little except that we’re outside the

cavern. The trees are so plentiful and the bushes so thick that the moon gives us no help. I hope we shall soon reach a place where we can use our eyes."

"We have been so fortunate that we must make no more blunders, if we can help it. You know how apt one is to lose his way in the woods at such a time. Listen!"

Through the solemn stillness crept a low, soft murmur, which the two recognized as the voice of the Ohio on its way to the distant sea. With this as their guide they could not go far astray. It seemed to both that the river lay in another direction, but they were too wise not to know that the misconception was with themselves.

"What of Jethro?" inquired Agnes.

"He has done his part, and neither of us can do any more for the other. He gave us notice that all was well with him, and we have nothing to do but to push on to the block-house without waiting for the sun to rise. He expects us to do so, for the understanding with him was that we would make the attempt to follow him as soon as we got his notice."

“I should think he would be near this spot.”

“He may not think it necessary. As you have said, there is no foretelling or accounting for his movements. We must leave him now to make his way back to the block-house as best he can. He has been so fortunate thus far that we have reason to hope he will reach there without trouble.”

“We may need to use our guns; ought we not to examine them?”

“It is a wise suggestion, as is everything that comes from you.”

The old-fashioned rifle, such as was used by the pioneers of the West, was the inferior of the present arm in many respects. As is well known, it was so heavy as to be quite a burden to a strong man, who was glad to avail himself of a rest in sighting it. Sometimes the ramrod served that purpose, and often a log or branch of a tree, though the hunter and ranger in the woods was expert without these aids. Repeating weapons of the crudest pattern may have been known in Europe, but they were unheard of on this side of the

Atlantic, as was the use of the percussion cap.

When the wadding had been rammed home on top of the charge of powder (the ramming being continued until the rod bounded upward in the barrel), the bullet, generally wrapped about with a bit of muslin fashioned for that purpose, was carefully shoved down the chamber, and gently but firmly pressed in place, there being no bounding of the rod in this instance. If the muslin was not at hand, a piece of paper, or a fragment torn from one's clothing, in an emergency, did duty. Then the cumbersome hammer, clasp-
ing the piece of flint, was drawn back so as to expose the pan, into which the powder was poured. The hammer was discreetly let down, and the black grains were thus retained in place. The weapon was then ready for service.

When one of those guns was submerged for any time under water the powder became unfit for use. The remedy was to withdraw the charge and reload the gun. This was done by means of a screw at the end of the ramrod, from which the cap was twisted.

George Ashbridge went through this operation with both weapons. He had learned to do it in the dark almost as well as in the daylight. When he passed the smaller gun back to Agnes, it was with the certainty that it would not fail her.

He now began picking his way through the forest in the direction of the river. His wish was to reach the trail leading to the block-house, along which they could hasten with a speed that ought to take them thither in the course of two or three hours.

The task for a time was a hard one. Rocks, bowlders, gulleys, sharp elevations and depressions were on every hand, and only by the utmost care did he prevent many a tumble. He kept slightly in advance, so as to select the path for his companion, who displayed characteristic coolness, courage, and readiness in following him.

"Matters are improving," he said, in a guarded undertone, as he came to a brief halt and reached out for her hand; "the way is not so rough as it was, and we shall soon reach a more level portion."

“I hope so,” she whispered; “but, George, I am sure some one is following us; I have heard footsteps in the last few minutes close to me.”

“It may be Jethro, who is afraid to speak.”

“I think not.”

Unfortunately, Agnes Altman was right in her conclusion.

CHAPTER X.

A SUPPRESSED CRY.

AS in the former instance, sufficient intimations have been given regarding the movements of Jethro Juggens for the reader to know that the part laid out for him had been performed well. His experience, however, differed in many respects from anything that had yet befallen him.

It has been told that when he shot from under the cavern into daylight he came within a hair of losing his life. The hardness of his head saved him, as it had done more than once in his career.

"Gracious heben!" he growled, as he scrambled out of the water, "ef Marse George and Miss Agnes come frough in dat style dey'll be smashed all to flinders, and when dey start fur de block-house will find dey hain't got any heads to take 'long wid 'em."

“But Miss Agnes knows a heap more dan George, fact almost as much as me, and she’ll tink ob some way to sabe ’em; like ’nough she’ll find a feather-bed inside de cavern, which she can hold in front ob dar heads, so dey won’t strike as hard as me.”

Jethro’s massive strength and perfect health enabled him to rally quite readily from the shock he had received, and he bestirred himself. Several hours of daylight still remained, and he could not forget his pledge to Ashbridge to notify him in case the venture ended well. The next step was for him to steal down the ravine to the point he had reached before, and fling the stone upward to the ledge as a signal that his friends might undertake a journey over the “underground railway” with some hope of reaching their destination in safety.

Fully mindful of the danger which encompassed him on every hand, Jethro stole among the trees, around rocks and bowlders, and through the tangled vines and undergrowth, until he gained the head of the ravine without seeing or having been seen by a single

Shawanoë. With the same care that he had shown from the first, he secreted himself in the spot where he was on the point of firing at the two Shawanoes earlier in the day.

He saw at once that it would not do for him to repeat his venture. At the top of the ravine, on the same side with the opening to the cavern, an agitation drew his attention, and he quickly perceived that the Indians were at some mischief. Glimpses were seen of others stealthily moving about on the opposite crest, so that, had Jethro ventured from his hiding-place into the ravine, discovery was inevitable.

“I’ll hab to wait till dey go away or night comes. De folks in dar won’t move till dey knows it am all right wid me; darfore de notice must be sent to ’em.”

When the shadows of night began closing around him, Jethro discovered the meaning of the puzzling movements. A burning log was let down from the rocks above and dropped in front of the cavern entrance, speedily followed by others, as has been told in another place.

“De scamperageous heathen!” exclaimed

the youth, boiling with indignation; "dey mean to burn up de folks!"

Reflection, however, speedily convinced Jethro that if the Shawanoes had undertaken the contract they would find themselves "unable to deliver the goods." There was too much space in the cavern behind the fugitives to endanger their lives from suffocation, unless the fire should be made much fiercer and be long continued.

This fear greatly stirred the fellow, who became so anxious to aid his friends that he ventured into the ravine without waiting as long as was prudent. He kept close under the bank on the right, and thus gained the benefit of shadow, since the reflection of the burning wood was shut off by the projecting ledge. His movement could not have been more guarded and stealthy, and, when he stood directly beneath the blazing wood, it was with the conviction that he was undetected, though certain that some of the warriors were upon the opposite crest.

He had selected the stone that was to do duty before leaving his perch in the rocks,

and he now flung it aloft with great power and skill. He was compelled, however, to hurl it so nearly perpendicular, that, as has been told, it failed to lodge, and narrowly missed descending upon his crown, as the lunch had done when tossed over by Ashbridge. The second effort succeeded.

"Dar!" he muttered, with a sigh of satisfaction, "Dat tells de whole story, and all dey hab to do am to do what dey hab to do."

He had maintained his position so continuously in the shadow, that he was confident that he had escaped the keen eyes of the hostiles, and restraining his impatience, began stealing back again, with a caution and deliberation which Simon Kenton himself could not have surpassed.

Proceeding in this guarded fashion, Jethro finally arrived at the base of the rocks from which he had ascended into the ravine. He paused a moment and looked back and listened. He was so far removed from where the wood was blazing and crackling on the ledge that none of its glow fell near him, but the gray walls on the other side were clearly outlined,

and high up the face of the cliff on the right the crimson light shone with weird effect.

Seeing nothing to cause misgiving, the servant began climbing the sloping rocks in front of him. The moon, which was now above the tree-tops, added its faint illumination to the impressive scene. The Shawanoes had ceased throwing down fuel upon the flames, and an oppressive silence had settled over ravine and forest.

Jethro paused upon reaching the elevated perch from which he had descended and carefully studied the faintly illuminated gloom behind him.

"I don't tink any ob de heathen cotched sight on me, dough I went mighty clus to whar dey war. Dat must hab been," he added, with a touch of his natural waggery, "dat I was not only in de darkness myself, but I am also as dark as I kin be."

The chuckle with which he welcomed his own witticism was checked by the sudden discovery that a dim, shadowy object was not only at the base of the slope, but was silently making its way upward toward him. The

light was too faint for him too see clearly, but he could not doubt its identity.

“It’s one ob ’em, suah ! He seed me after all and has followed me, but he hain’t cotched me yit.”

Veiling the sound with the utmost care, Jethro cautiously raised the hammer of his rifle. Faint as was the dull click, it seemed to strike the ear of the shadowy form ascending the rocks. He paused and remained in a couching posture for a full minute, evidently listening. All this time the African did not stir a muscle and seemed to hold his breath. He did not wish to frighten away the warrior, but feared he had done so.

But, hearing nothing further, the Indian must have decided he was mistaken, for he resumed his ascent of the rugged incline.

Jethro felt certain from the moment of discovery that the game was his. He was so screened himself that his enemy could not see him (and possibly there may have been a slight favoring circumstance in his ebony complexion), while he never lost trace of the other in the dim obscurity. His intention was to

wait until the Indian was almost within arm's length, and then, raising his rifle, let fly. His mood resembled to some extent that shown by the American race at such times, and which is the same as that which causes the cat to play with the mouse before crunching it in its jaws.

The Shawanoe, like all his people, was "shod with silence" as he came up the rocks. The listening Jethro could not detect the faintest rustling, and but for the dim, shadowy outlines, as revealed in the faint moonlight, would never have suspected that one of the red men had discovered him when he was under the fire on the ledge, and set out to secure his scalp.

The warrior was within ten feet or less, his shoulders thrown forward, his posture a crouching one, as he now advanced with more deliberation, when Jethro silently rose to his feet and confronted him.

"Dar! I reckon as how yo' hab come 'bout far 'nough, yo' ole heathen! Dat's de way I sarve de likes ob yo'."

Up went the gun, and at the same instant

the trigger was pulled. A hissing, sputtering flash followed, but there was no report. It had missed fire.

Unlike Ashbridge and Agnes, Jethro had forgotten to withdraw the charge and reload it after the wetting it received.

But he knew the danger of a personal encounter with a warrior who held a deadly knife. If he permitted it there would be little hope for him. He dropped his weapon to the ground and recoiled a step.

The Shawanoe, who, but for the mishap, would have ended his career then and there, comprehended on the instant the nature of his escape. He, too, dropped his gun, and, snatching the knife from his girdle, bounded forward like a tiger and struck a vicious blow at his dusky antagonist.

The latter's slight recoil was all that saved him. The blade cut the air in front of the African's face, and he, without once attempting to use his own knife, stepped forward again and flung his arms about the body of his enemy. Providentially, as the vise-like limbs closed, they clasped both arms of the

Indian above the elbow and pinned them to his sides. Before he could writhe himself free, as he assuredly would have done had a half-minute's opportunity been given, Jethro lifted the squirming body fully a foot above the ground with as much ease as if his enemy were an infant, swung it around to the right so as to gain momentum, and then hurled it from him.

The long, sinewy figure went spinning into the darkness, arms and legs beating the air, but utterly powerless to help himself, or check his flight in the slightest degree. So prodigious was the propulsion given by Jethro, that the sprawling Indian cleared the entire slope, striking nothing until he came down with stunning violence at the bottom of the ravine.

"Dar! I reckons you'll sot 'there awhile!" exclaimed the dusky youth, who plainly heard the "dull thud," as the downward progress of his assailant ceased. "I don't know how I come to forget 'bout de charge in my gun bein' wet; I hope de oder folks will hab more sense."

He showed his prudence by stealing from

the dangerous place, without waiting to repair the mistake he had made with his weapon. He did not go far, however, before he halted and put his rifle in instant readiness.

“I spose I might hab picked up his gun and fotchd it along, but dar would hab been too much risk, and my own has neber failed me when I treated it right.”

Relieved of all fear for the time concerning himself, Jethro's thoughts naturally reverted to his friends. He reasoned :

“Dey hab done tried to foller me by dis time, and am on de outside or drowned, I can't fotch 'em back to life again or do 'em any good. Marse George was so disgumptioned 'cause I didn't go to the block-house when I had the chance, dat ef he and Miss Agnes gets frough all right, dey'll strike for de same place dat I had better likewise also strike for.”

Inasmuch as the fellow proceeded to act upon this decision, we may part with him for a time, though the course of incidents must soon bring him forward again.

It will be recalled that George Ashbridge and Agnes Altman, after emerging from the

little stream on the outside of the cavern, set out to retrace their way to the trail leading to the block-house. It was laborious work, and considerable time passed before any improvement was noted. Then, when he paused for a brief rest, and, turning about, took the hand of his beloved, she whispered the terrifying intelligence that some one was following them, and she not did believe it was Jethro Juggens.

"How can you know that?" he asked in the most guarded of undertones, as he drew her still nearer and held his mouth close to her ear.

"He would have spoken or made more noise."

"He may be afraid to speak, and has learned to walk carefully; where does he seem to be?"

"That's the strangest part of it, George," she replied, clinging more closely to him and glancing around in the gloom, as though she expected to catch sight of the dreaded being; "once it was on the right, next on the left, but most of the time close behind me."

"It could not have been for long."

“No ; for it is but a short time since we left the cavern.”

“Why did you not tell me?”

“I was sure you heard him ; I dreaded to speak, and I did hope that it might prove to be Jethro, but I am sure it is not—sh !”

The warning was not uttered because the young woman had heard anything just then, but in the expectation that something might fall on her ears. The two stood as motionless as the tree trunks around them, and looked and listened with all the intensity at their command. The soft rustling of the gentle wind among the leaves above them, and the almost inaudible murmur of the Ohio were the only sounds that came to their ears.

The Shawanoe—as Ashbridge now believed their pursuer to be—was a veteran on the trail, and kept such close study of the movements of the pioneers that he halted at the same moment. The youth resorted to an artifice, holding fast the hand of Agnes, as he did so, that she might not be deceived. He raised his feet as if walking, but put them down in the same place, so that he did not

change his position. Then he abruptly stopped with a whispered query :

“ Did you hear anything more ? ”

“ No.”

“ That proves he is an Indian ; I hope there is only one.”

Evidently nothing was to be gained, and much might be lost by standing where they were. By some unaccountable means one Shawanoe at least had learned of the flight of the fugitives and was dogging them. There could be no safety until he was thrown off the trail.

Ashbridge gently drew his loved companion forward. She understood his meaning and stepped as lightly as possible. Could they slip away unnoticed in the darkness? Possibly they might have succeeded but for a slight mishap which spoiled all.

Ashbridge caught his foot in a running vine, which twisted like wire round his ankle. He loosened his grasp of Agnes' hand to save himself, but went forward on his knees, and dropped his gun. It was quickly recovered, however, and he clambered unhurt to his feet.

“That was an awkward fall,” he said; “I don’t know that it would not be a good thing to have a little sunlight, or at least, more of the moon’s rays.”

He naturally expected some comment or response upon this, but there was none.

“Here I am, Agnes; let me take your hand; this way.”

To his dismay there was no reply to his request. He had thought he heard her light footsteps on the leaves, but his heart almost ceased beating when he noted that the sounds, although still audible, were rapidly growing fainter. They were receding!

“Agnes! Agnes!” he called in anguish, “where are you? Speak, that I may rush to you! Speak, Agnes!”

A suppressed cry, as if the words were smothered in their utterance, came through the impenetrable forest arches to him, and then all was still.

CHAPTER XI.

A SINGULAR MEETING.

FOR one moment George Ashbridge believed it was a dream. The whole thing came and passed with such incredible swiftness that he was dazed. In one breath, as it were, he was talking with Agnes Altman, and the next she had vanished.

It was that partial, smothered cry, borne to him through the darkness, that made known the woeful truth. She had been seized and carried off by an Indian. It was done with that consummate cunning and deftness sometimes shown by the American race under certain circumstances.

It may have been one, two or even more Indians that had come upon the fugitives after their remarkable escape from the cavern. Instead of making a quick, fierce attack, which in the gloom would have been fatal, they

chose to follow them with a stealth that led Ashbridge to suspect for a time that his companion was mistaken.

Their primal object, as events afterwards proved, was the capture of the young woman. It may be that, knowing the relation between her and her escort, they also knew that if she were taken and her lover left he would walk into their power, without effort of their own, in his desperate resolve to rescue her. It may have been, too, that in catching his foot in the vine at that instant, and stumbling, George Ashbridge builded better than he knew, and escaped a blow or movement that would have been equally fatal but for the apparent mishap.

But without attempting to theorize, when for the present it must be unsatisfactory, let us relate events as they occurred.

The instant the faint cry, suppressed on the moment, struck the ear of Ashbridge, it roused him from his bewilderment, and he dashed in its direction with a blind energy which would not have been his at any other time. Where all was blank darkness, in the midst of the

deep wood, only one result was possible. It was fortunate that, after being scratched, bruised, and thrown again to the ground, he was not seriously hurt.

The violent fall served partially to recall him to his senses. Climbing to his feet, he rested his hand against the trunk of a tree at his side and strove to retain mastery of his senses.

Strange that the captors of Agnes could move so rapidly through the wood with her as to make no noise, and yet he could not advance a rod without crashing like a bison and finally falling to the ground. He listened closely, but the same murmur of the Ohio and the sighing of the night wind among the branches were the only sounds that came to him.

A sudden suspicion flashed upon Ashbridge. It was that the captors of his beloved had not moved more than a few paces from the spot where she was seized. A less distance than that would have been sufficient for perfect concealment, and would account for the stillness when he sought to learn the line of flight through his own sense of hearing.

“Agnes!” he called, in a voice that penetrated a hundred feet or more in the forest; “answer me! Give me some sign, if you can!”

She would have done so had it been in her power; but no response reached the despairing lover, and he did not repeat the cry.

Ashbridge started, for while peering through the gloom he caught a starlight twinkle, which flashed for a second or two and then vanished. It was as if the gentle wind had opened a view through the leaves and then instantly closed it. The light lay almost directly toward the river.

But to him it meant a great deal. He believed the main party of Shawanoes had a fire burning at that point, and a goodly number of their warriors would be gathered around it. Still further, he thought it equally probable that Agnes was with them.

The youth closed his lips with grim determination as he began stealing toward the point. He gripped his gun and muttered, for there was no risk which he would not eagerly

incur for the sake of the beloved one that had been snatched from his very side.

While groping along another momentary twinkle caught his gaze, vanishing, as before, in the same breath. It was proof, however, that he was following the right path, and he pushed on. By this time he had fairly rallied from the fearful blow, and was his old, cautious, guarded self again, on the alert against running into danger, and watchful of the devices and subtleties of the Shawanoes, whom he was confident were near him.

A surprise awaited the youth, for, cautiously approaching the light until he could see it and the surroundings, he discovered no one visible. A small blaze, whose appearance showed that it had been burning for a considerable time, was kindled at the base of a gnarled oak; but whoever started it seemed to have decided to make a change of base before the arrival of Ashbridge.

It may have been fancy on his part, but at the moment of entering the outer verge of light something vanished among the shadows on the opposite side and was lost in the darkness.

"I wonder whether that was an Indian, or was it only imagination?" he asked himself, afraid to venture further.

Whether or not he was mistaken did not greatly concern him, for it was a sad disappointment that he did not come upon a party of Shawanoes, with Agnes a captive among them. What he saw, or rather what he failed to see, convinced him that she was not in the immediate vicinity, and probably had not been there at all. His eyes studied the surroundings of the little blaze which had become simply a mass of coals, but nothing was discerned to show the recent presence of anyone near it. The open space was only a few feet in extent, and a bush no more than a couple of yards from the blaze had not been trampled under foot.

"It looks as if some one had flung the sticks together, touched them off, and then stealthily left—"

The faintest possible rustling caused Ashbridge to turn his head. As he did so one of the embers fell apart, increasing the faint area of illumination. Dimly outlined in the gloom

behind him appeared a tall figure, standing near enough to touch him with outstretched hand. The youth whirled like a flash and leaped backward with his rifle ready, but ere he could bring the weapon to a level a strange, chuckling sound pierced the stillness.

"Yunker, take my advice and don't be in such a powerful hurry."

"Simon Kenton, as I live!" exclaimed the astounded Ashbridge.

"I reckon," coolly replied the veteran ranger, stepping nearer, extending his horny hand, and giving that of the youth a fervent pressure.

"You are the last man I expected to see. Oh! why didn't I meet you sooner!" mourned the young pioneer, whose delight at finding his old friend gave way to the depression of despair at the memory of the overwhelming catastrophe that had just occurred.

"The best reason I can think of, younker, is 'cause you met me later," replied Kenton, whose sense of waggery was not always under control.

"Kenton, Agnes Altman has just been made captive by the Shawanoes!"

This intelligence was so startling to the ranger that all thought of humor was driven from his brain. He recoiled a step and exclaimed, in a gasping whisper:

"What!"

"It is true."

"Stand back a little further where the light can't fall on us, talk low, and tell me about it."

George Ashbridge did so to the minutest particular, Kenton neither stirring nor speaking until the remarkable story was finished.

"Wal, I'll be skulped!" he muttered, with a sigh; "I warn't countin' on nothin' like that; I'm powerful sorry for the gal, for her folks, and for you."

"But, Kenton," said the distressed Ashbridge, "I can't stand here idle; tell me what can be done."

"Nothin'," was the disheartening reply.

"But we must do something! Do you mean to say that because the Shawanoes have stolen Agnes we shall give up and leave her with them?"

.

"No, younker, I didn't say nothin' of the sort. What I was drivin' at was that while this darkness continues we can't do nothin'; when sunup comes it'll be different."

"And between now and then what will happen to poor Agnes?"

"Nothin'," repeated Kenton, and this time his reply had a pleasanter sound than before.

"You mean that no ill will befall her?"

"That's it."

"Thank God, but what reason have you for feeling so certain?"

"Nothin' can be plainer; if they wished to sculp her or do her harm the varmints wouldn't have took her from you. They'd 've tomahawked or shot you both while you was tramping through the woods."

"And why didn't they shoot me, as they surely might have done?"

"There must have been some good reason, and I can't speak with sartinty, but my idea is that there warn't more'n two Injins, and like 'nough only one. He didn't want to kill or hurt the gal, but for some reason was bent on runnin' off with her. If he tackled you, she

would be likely to give him the slip in the rumpus. So he or them was follerin' and waitin' for the chance to dodge off with her."

"And it came when I stumbled?"

"Purcisely and exactly."

"What would have happened if I had not fallen?"

"Nobody can tell for sartin; but I guess you'd 've got a whack or a knife or a bullet before long, so it was powerful lucky as it was."

Ashbridge, however, could not see it in the light of his cooler and more experienced friend. How anything could be more unlucky than the capture of his beloved companion was beyond his ability to comprehend.

"And you see no way of our doing anything to help her to-night?"

"I don't onless some powerful piece of good luck falls to us."

"Now, Kenton, to go back as far as necessary, how was it those Shawanoes (for I must believe there was more than one) learned of our leaving the cavern?"

"That's what I would call a piece of powerful bad luck. It was nothin' but chance that

brought 'em where they run agin you. It wouldn't happen agin in a thousand times."

"Then they had no suspicion of our escape?"

"They couldn't, for I'd never dreamed of it. It was another of the doings of that darkey, which knocks all my ideas endways."

"He has done some extraordinary things during the past year."

"That he has, and I've an idea that he'll do more of 'em afore this bis'ness is done."

Little did Simon Kenton suspect the speedy and striking manner in which this off-hand prophecy was to be fulfilled.

"Now," said Ashbridge, "since you say we can do nothing at present, tell me how it is that you happen to be in this place at this time?"

"I've been on a scout in the Injin country and was takin' things easy on my way back to the block-house. I was hungry and shot a wild turkey a couple of miles off; I carried it here, started a fire and cooked it."

"Did you know the Shawanoes were in this neighborhood?"

"I reckon."

"Then you ran great risk."

"Not as much as you would have run; I cooked and eat what I wanted, but I kept my ears open and didn't let any of the varmints steal up to me. You tried it, and moved as soft like as the Panther himself, but I heerd you, and got behind you without you knowing it."

"True; I didn't hear you."

"And then I made the rustling to let you know I was there. If you had been one of the varmints you wouldn't have heard me."

"Have you any of that turkey left, Kenton?"

"I think I can find some," remarked the ranger, moving toward the fire, near which he picked up from the leaves what had escaped the notice of the youth, being a portion of the partially cooked bird.

"What I didn't need I flung away," he remarked, handing a goodly portion of the fowl to his young friend. "You're wise in eatin' when you git the chance."

Despite the trying scenes through which

Ashbridge had so recently passed, his vigorous frame and appetite demanded the food, and he ate it with relish, although its rareness would have rendered it distasteful to one of us placed in his situation.

"If I could be certain that Agnes is not suffering," he said, as the final remains were cast from him, "I would feel more relieved than I can tell."

"You needn't worry on that count," was the unexpected reply. "The varmints won't let her suffer."

The hunter was on the point of adding a remark which would have astonished his companion, and caused him strange emotions, but he checked himself under the feeling that the moment had not yet come for him to do so.

"These one or two Indians of whom we have spoken will soon join the main party of Shawanoes."

"That ain't sartin."

"And what chance shall we have of rescuing her?"

Instead of replying, Kenton remained silent for a full minute. Again he was debat-

ing whether he should explain what was passing in his mind. He well understood the tumult of feeling it would cause on the part of the youth, and the fear that it might interfere with schemes the ranger was revolving held his lips mute for the time on the all-important question.

They were standing so far back from the smoldering fire that they could not see each other's faces, or even the outlines of their forms. Ashbridge was about to say something when Kenton laid his hand on his arm with a sibilant "Sh!" The youth had heard nothing, but he knew his companion had, and he neither whispered nor moved.

"Sh! look!" repeated the hunter.

Since there was but one direction in which the eyes could be of service, the youth gazed toward the few glowing coals. Just beyond them the faint, almost invisible form of an Indian warrior appeared for one moment and then dissolved in the gloom behind him.

"The varmint is gone," whispered Kenton, after a suitable waiting; "he come nigh enough to see the light and a little further to

larn what he could, but I reckon he didn't larn much."

"He may be the Indian or one of them that has Agnes," replied Ashbridge, trembling with eager excitement.

"I'll soon know; wait here till I come back."

Again just before moving away, the hunter checked the revelation that struggled for utterance. He felt, however, that the moment must soon come when he would have to tell the secret, which as yet was undreamed of by George Ashbridge.

"He shall larn it soon enough," decided Kenton, as he glided silently from the side of his young friend.

CHAPTER XII.

ALL AT SEA.

THROUGHOUT Jethro Juggens' stirring experiences he kept his bearings. He never forgot the right course to take to reach the Ohio river, and consequently was aware of the way to turn to find the trail leading to the block-house.

"I've done all I kin to help de folks," he muttered, while threading his way southward through the woods, "and dey can't spect me to look after dem all de time. People hab got to larn to walk alone some time."

The distance seemed long to the path, and more than once he stopped, under the suspicion that he had gone astray; but the murmur of the river was an unerring guide, and finally he knew, from the smooth surface under his feet and the freedom from undergrowth, that he had struck the trail.

“Luck’s wid me to-night,” was his rightful decision; “now I’ve got a straight road to de block-house ef none ob de heathens don’t get in my way or run agin me.”

A not unnatural feeling, however, caused his footsteps to lag and finally brought him to a halt after advancing less than an eighth of a mile.

“I dunno wheder I’m doin’ right or not; my conscience am slambangin’ ’round inside ob me and sayin’: ‘Jethro Juggens, ain’t yo’ ’shamed ob yo’self? What bisness hab yo’ to desart dem chillun, when yo’ sot out and was sent ’long fur de obspress purpose ob takin’ keer ob ’em? What’ll Marse Ashbridge and Altman say when I arroves at de block-house widout ’em? What’ll Captain Bushwick tink? Will Kenton and Boone and de rest ob de people be discumsattersfied? Will dey tink I’ve done my dooty? No, Jethro Juggens, it’ll neber do to desart ’em.’”

This decision of the servant arose from several causes. It will be recalled that at the time of starting he was under the belief that Ashbridge and Agnes had set out for the

block-house and were well under way, so that he had nothing to do but to follow them. After signaling to them, however, of his own safety, he remembered that he had made haste to withdraw from the dangerous ravine, and his encounter with the buck that followed him caused little delay on the road. He had pursued a direct course to the trail and already advanced some distance along it.

Now, it was not to be supposed that his friends would be equally expeditious. The supposition of Jethro, therefore, that they were in advance of him was a mistake. They must be behind him.

It was natural for the dusky youth to look upon his own exploits with considerable complacency. In entering and leaving the cavern, he did that which it is safe to believe no ranger or hunter of the West had ever surpassed. He had pioneered the way for his friends, and thereby done them a service beyond estimate.

As a consequence, it was no wonder that he looked upon himself as indispensable to the two so long as they remained in peril. It

would not do for him to appear at the block-house with no tidings of them, after knowing the great danger in which they were placed. Greatly as he had favored them, more remained to be done.

But the question of how he was to serve them further was one which Jethro, with all his intense cogitation, could not answer. He felt he had made a mistake in not groping his way back to where the stream issued from the side of the cavern and rejoining his friends. He did not doubt his ability to find the place, but, the error having been committed, it was now too late to repair it. They must have emerged long since, and were now looking for the trail, if they had not already found it.

“Dar’s only one big diffunkilty in de way,” he reflected, standing in the path, peering into the gloom, and listening; “I’m so orful hungry dat I feel like faintin’ dead away. ’Pears to me I ain’t like oder folks, ’cause I’m hungry all de time. Howsumeber,” he added, desperately, “I’m so used to it dat I s’pose I kin stand it fur a week or two longer.”

In the attitude of attention, it was not long

before he became sensible of another feeling; he was becoming sleepy.

“When a gemman am hungry and sleepy he ain’t ob much ’count. Ef I war suah dat I had time to take a nap I’d doo’t; but s’pose Marse George and Miss Agnes walked by me while I war asleep; dey wouldn’t know it, and when I woke I wouldn’t know it. I’s got to fix up some obtrivance dat will purvent dat—I hab it!”

Groping along the trail for some minutes, it was easy to find a tree growing directly beside it. Jethro sat down with his back against the trunk and his feet extended across the path. One leg was crooked at the knee, as it rested beside the other.

“Dat’s what I call a big idee,” grinned the delighted African; “I kin go to sleep now widout fear; if Marse George and Miss Agnes come along dey’ll bofe tumble ober me; dat’ll wake me up, and den we kin shake hands and all be happy ’cause we hab met.”

Secure in this faith, Jethro assumed an easy posture, and in a few minutes was sunk in as sound slumber as if in his bed at home. He

was running much risk, for any one would have said that a party of Shawanoes were as likely to pass that way as his friends. It so came about, however, that neither took it into their heads to travel over that portion of the trail, and the sleep of the youth remained unbroken. When he opened his eyes the sun was shining in the heavens.

Jethro sat upright, feeling somewhat cramped because of his long-constrained position, yawned and rubbed his eyes, and looked about him.

“Whar am I?” he asked, staring around. “Oh! I discommembers—wal, dat’s qu’ar! De folks habn’t been ’long here, ’cause ef dey had dey would hab tumbled ober me and I’d been suah to hab waked up.”

He was so certain that they had not passed over the trail before he assumed his peculiar position that no misgiving came to him; he was convinced that from some cause he did not understand they had not gone along the path at all in the direction of the block-house.

“I’m afeared dat means trouble,” was his melancholy conclusion; “I made a great mis-

take in lebin' de folks to demselves last night; I oughter stayed wid 'em right frough."

Still keeping his seat, he thought hard.

"Somethin' hab happened to 'em; I must hunt 'em up and find out what I'll hab to do to set things straight—hilloa!"

Coming from the direction of the block-house was a fine-looking buck. He was following the trail, and had just swung around a slight bend a hundred yards away when the animal seemed to scent something wrong. He stopped short in his deliberate gait, threw up his head, with its noble antlers, and stared along the path to learn what it meant. He saw the dusky figure seated on the ground, and, instinctively recognizing him as a mortal enemy, whirled like a flash to plunge among the trees and out of sight.

But while in the act of turning, the deadly bullet entered just back of the extended fore leg, bored its way through his heart, and was lost among the leaves and branches beyond. Rarely does one of the cervus species fall, no matter how smitten, and the handsome creature made several frenzied leaps before crashing full

against the trunk of an ash in front of him and going to the ground in a lifeless heap.

Jethro Juggens had fired from a sitting position, taking aim on the instant and with his usual unerring accuracy. He now rose to his feet, and, in accord with the law which has already been referred to more than once, carefully reloaded his rifle and poured the powder in the pan.

“De name of de hungriest man in Ohio and Kaintuck am Jethro Juggens,” he exclaimed, fairly smacking his chops in anticipation of the feast before him; “dat buck am a purty good-size animal, and I hope he’ll do for me.”

He ran to where the body lay, and with his keen hunting-knife cut out the choicest portion, its dimensions being such that we dare not state them through fear they would not be credited. It looked as if for once at least the requirements of the appetite of Jethro Juggens were to be fully met.

But in his hunger and high spirits he did not forget several sensible precautions. There was fear that the report of his gun might

bring some inquiring parties of the wrong complexion to the trail. It would not do, therefore, for him to cook the food in the immediate neighborhood. The river was within convenient distance and he decided to go thither, wash the venison, and then seek out a secluded spot to start the fire.

On the other hand, he was ever mindful of the possibility that George Ashbridge and Agnes Altman might pass on their way to the block-house. They were many hours overdue, and were liable, as he viewed it, to appear at any moment. His intention was to return to the trail as soon as he finished his meal, and he fixed upon a simple artifice to learn whether they had passed during his absence.

A small branch, too insignificant to attract notice, was laid designedly across the trail in such position that no one going in either direction could fail to disturb it, that is, except the red or white hunter saw something suspicious in the trifling object and stepped around it. Jethro carefully impressed on his mind the location of the tiny limb, and then moved

off among the trees to the edge of the river, certain that when he returned he would know of a verity whether his friends or any one else had gone by.

Seeking the most secluded position possible under the protecting undergrowth along the river, he gathered a mass of dry twigs and leaves, and, with the aid of flint, tinder and steel, soon had a brisk little fire under way. The haunch of venison was carefully cut in thin strips, and though it was not the most favorable season for that kind of game, it may be said that Jethro enjoyed one of the greatest feasts of his life. He literally ate until he could eat no more.

“Ah!” he sighed, in the luxury of repletion, “It ain’t offen dat I hab a breakfast, dinner and supper all togeder like dat. It makes a gemman feel good from de top of his feet to de sole ob his head. Now I’m able to do my dooty and look after de folks.”

He prudently quenched the fire as soon as it had served its purpose, and was quite certain that, protected by the density of the surrounding vegetation, it had not attracted the attention of any unfriendly eyes.

Judging by the height of the sun in the heavens, the forenoon was half gone. He was sure that events of great importance had occurred since parting with the two fugitives in the cave the night before. Convinced that they had not passed along the trail in the direction of the block-house (unless during the comparatively brief period spent by him in preparing and eating his wholesale meal), it was self-evident that some all-potent cause had intervened to keep them from doing so.

To Jethro's mind only one cause could exist. They had been captured or slain by some of the Shawanoes that were so numerous in the neighborhood.

"And I don't show myself at the block-house or to any ob de folks till I knows all 'bout it. I hain't heered any guns go off," he remarked, forgetting the many hours during which he had been oblivious to all sights and sounds, "so it looks as if dar hadn't been any shootin' goin' on."

He came stealing back between the trees and through the undergrowth with as much care as if he knew a war party was prowling

within a hundred yards of him. Nothing was seen or heard to cause alarm, and he reached the path that held so strong an interest to him.

His heart gave a quick throb when he approached the tell-tale twig and saw at the first glance that it had been disturbed. It had been knocked out of the position in which he left it. In fact, it had been brushed aside by the trail of a passing foot.

“Gorrynation, dey hab went by while I was down by de ribber!” he exclaimed in delight, forgetting that any person in walking over the path would have been likely to move it in the same manner.

“It am dem and no mistake,” he added, starting in the direction of the block-house at a loping trot, which he was able to maintain for an hour or two without fatigue.

As he ran, the possibility of a mistake occurred to him, and he not only restrained his longing to call to his friends in a guarded undertone, but slackened his pace upon approaching each turn in the trail, carefully peering ahead to make sure the course was clear before breaking into a trot again.

The path for some distance was more winding than at any other place, passing in and out among the trees with a persistency that made it hard to understand how it was the rangers who set the trail in the first place did it in such an eccentric fashion, when no apparent cause existed.

But was there ever such a thing known as a straight path across a field or through a stretch of woods?

Jethro was pushing forward in this manner, when, reaching a more open portion of the forest, he detected something moving among the trees in advance. He instantly dropped to a walk and peered intently at it.

The first glance showed him it was a man advancing along the trail beyond the point where it made more of a bend than usual. He was going in the same direction with the African, so that the latter saw him plainly, while, for the moment, the other knew nothing of the person behind him.

The second glance revealed his identity.

“Helloa, Marse George!” called the delighted Jethro, “what yo’r hurry?”

The astonished Ashbridge turned like a flash, nervously grasping his gun as he looked around. He did not move, but stared curiously at the servant, as, with a beaming face, he hurried forward to greet him.

"Where in the name of creation did you come from, Jethro?" asked the youth, extending his hand and warmly greeting him.

"Been lookin' for yo' and Miss Agnes."

The servant saw from the expression on the countenance of his friend that some disaster had happened, and the question that followed was uttered in a tremulous voice :

"Whar am she, Marse George?"

"Heaven only knows! I don't."

"But whar—whar—did yo' lebe her? When did yo' see her last?"

Ashbridge controlled his emotions with a strong effort, and answered, with seeming calmness :

"We left the cavern soon after receiving your signal. All seemed to be going well, and we were doing our best to reach this trail, so as to go to the block-house, when she disappeared. One or two Indians had been

stealthily following us, and at the moment I stumbled she was snatched up by them and carried off."

"De Lord sabe us! Did yo' eber hear de like?"

"That isn't all, Jethro. While I was trying to find some trace of her I came upon Simon Kenton, who had started a little fire to prepare himself some food."

"De bery ting I've been doin'; did yo' observe de carcus ob de deer a little way back?"

"No; I am in too much trouble to observe anything, or to think where I am or what I am doing."

"But what's become of Marse Kenton?"

"That's a greater mystery than the disappearance of Agnes, for I know that she is in the hands of the red men, but I have no idea where he is or what has become of him."

The astounded Jethro stared a moment at his friend, and then, in a dazed way, asked:

"Am dis yo' and me, Marse George, and am we hyah, or am we somebody else and ain't we hyah, but in some oder place?"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ANTELOPE.

IT will be recalled that Simon Kenton and George Ashbridge were standing near the smouldering fire which the former had kindled, when an Indian warrior silently approached in the gloom and disappeared the next moment, with no more disturbance of the vegetation than if he had been a veritable shadow.

The youth suggested that the Shawanoe might be the one that had abducted Agnes Altman, or who belonged to the party. It was evident that, passing so near the hunter's camp fire, he caught its glow, and, turning aside for a brief investigation, had departed again.

It was not impossible that Ashbridge was right, and Kenton, instructing him to remain where he was until his return, set out to learn

the truth. The task was one of such extreme delicacy that the youth knew he could only be an incumbrance and might defeat the purpose of the ranger. Trying as was his situation, he could not object, and therefore awaited, with all the patience he could summon, the return of his friend.

Kenton was absent fully two hours. Ashbridge was in despair, when the almost inaudible signal of the ranger announced his presence at his elbow.

"Well, what did you learn?" was the eager question of the youth.

"Nothin' of account," was the unsatisfactory response.

"Wasn't that Indian one of those who took Agnes away?"

"No."

"You took a long time to learn it," was the bitter comment of Ashbridge, who strove in vain to repress his disappointment.

Kenton understood his companion and had no wish to trifle with him. The hardy pioneer was as sympathetic to those he loved as a woman.

"See here, younker," he said in that guarded tone which a person a dozen feet away could not have overheard, "the first thing a man that tramps in the woods has to learn is patience. I know how powerful anxious you was to have me come back, but you didn't want me to show up without having something to tell you."

"I was under the impression that such was the result."

Without noting the reproof in these words, Kenton, who, it was evident, was in some extraordinary quandary, remarked:

"This business is qu'ar, powerful qu'ar; younker, what would you think if I should tell you that not only didn't that varmint that sneaked up to the fire a while ago have nothin' to do with takin' off the gal, but none of the other Shawanoes did; what would you think of that?"

"If you said so, Kenton, I would believe you."

"Wal, I do say it."

"Do you mean that those parties that ran us into the cavern weren't Shawanoes?"

“Not by no means; all of them were that brand of varmints, and most of ’em are camped in a gully not more than two hundred yards from where we are standing. It was them that tried to burn you out of the cavern, that first chased you and the gal, and come powerful near winding up the whole business.”

“And do you mean to tell me that none of these people had anything to do with stealing Agnes?”

“That’s it exactly.”

“I don’t understand it,” exclaimed Ashbridge, with a sigh of bewilderment, “if there’s any explanation to be made, Kenton, I beg you will make it, and not keep me in this state of suspense, where you tell just enough for me to feel that I know nothing at all.”

“What I’ve been driving at, younker, is this: There was only one of the heathen that came up to look at the fire here. I followed him straight back to the big camp, where the main party has halted for a time. The gal isn’t in that camp or anywhere near it, and

none of them varmints have had anything to do with her takin' off."

"You have told me this before, but have not told me how you gained the knowledge."

"Of course I couldn't have larned what I've just said by standin' off and lookin' at the camp; there warn't nothin' in that, and I might have kept it up a week without being any wiser than afore, but I sneaked so close that, by listenin' powerful hard, I overheard a good deal of what was said; that's what kept me so long, but it done the business."

"What did you hear, Kenton?"

"I picked up 'nough to know that the Shawanoes had larned how you and the girl got out of the cavern. It must have been that you hadn't more than fairly left when they made a rush; there warn't 'nough fire at the front to keep 'em out. I 'spose they used torches and pushed things so hard that they found out almost right away that you'd swum out."

"Then we left in the nick of time, though Agnes and I could have stood them off a day or two."

“Wal, as soon as the Shawanoes larned how it was you had given ’em the slip, they dropped the whole bisness. They b’lieve you’ve got a good start, and are well toward the block-house, and with this dark night to help, they don’t think there’s any use in fol-lerin’ you further, and, what’s more, there ain’t none of them trying to do it.”

“You are so positive on this point, Kenton, that I accept what you say without question. You have told me what has not been done; now give me the particulars of something that has been done. If none of the Shawanoes whom you saw and listened to had anything to do with carrying away Agnes, may it not have been done by several of them, who have not rejoined the main party?”

“No,” was the positive reply of the ranger, “that isn’t their way of doing things; all the varmints they had when they first seed you are with ’em yet, ’cept of course them as you give the last sickness—I could tell that by what they said. They have their chief, too—”

“Is he the Panther?”

“No; he isn’t with ’em; this chief is a

chap almost as ugly, that has a name in Shawanoe which means Red Bird. He is a savage varmint, and none of his warriors would dare to try any trick like that on him. No Shawanoe heathen, as I told you afore, had anything to do with takin' off the gal."

"I have heard this more than once, Kenton, but some one did take her, and it is he or they whom I wish to know."

"Yunker, you have not forgot the Antelope, I reckon?"

"You mean that young Wyandot warrior who visited the block-house several times last winter and spring?"

"That's the chap; you remember, too, that the young heathen is one of the handsomest Indians any of us ever seed."

"Yes, that can not be denied."

"I never knowed but one that beat him, and he is Deerfoot, the Shawanoe. You haven't forgot, too, how the Antelope fell in love with the gal, Agnes Altman?"

It was anything but a pleasant reminiscence to George Ashbridge, but he resolutely faced the question.

“Yes; every one at the block-house noticed it, for the simpleton could not help showing it in his words, his manner, and even his looks.”

“Wal, it’s my belief that the Antelope is the one who stole the gal.”

The youth recoiled as if he had been struck a staggering blow. The information was as unexpected as it was astounding.

The sagacious Kenton suspected the truth from the moment he heard from Ashbridge the particulars of the disappearance of Agnes. It was the secret which he was on the point of uttering more than once, but was restrained by a feeling of delicacy and consideration for his young friend.

But the lover, great as was his respect for the acumen of Simon Kenton, would not admit he was right until he gave more reason for his theory than he had just done.

“I do not question your correctness as to the Shawanoes, but it all seems to be guess-work regarding the Antelope.”

“There’s where you’re wrong. Late this afternoon I seed the Antelope and another warrior of his tribe only a mile or two off in

the wood ; I didn't let him see me, as I made up my mind they were goin' to the block-house, so the lovesick Antelope could have another look at the gal, even if she cared nothing for him. I was so near that I heerd the sound of the shootin', but I didn't think there was nothin' 'bout it for me. If I'd knowed you and the gal were out and that you were mixed up in the business, of course I'd hurried down this way 'stead of takin' things easy. The minute you told me how she was stole from your side I felt as good as sartin that the varmint that done it was the Antelope."

"And why?"

"From his style; if it was a Shawanoe, or any other Wyandot, he wouldn't have let you alone. He would have used the knife or tomahawk or gun on you before he touched the girl."

"Why didn't he do so as it was?"

"The Antelope is a friend to the whites and has not been on the warpath against them for several reasons."

"But, under the circumstances, he must feel a special hatred for me."

“No doubt he would be glad to have you out of his way ; but though he is a simpleton in one thing, he knows ’nough to know that the worst way he could take to win the Flower of the Woods would be by sending you under.”

“You haven’t explained yet, Kenton, how it was that the Antelope and his companion came upon us immediately after we left the cavern.”

“There’s nothing to explain ’bout that ; they was tramping toward the Ohio so as to strike the trail to the fort, when they come right on to you. It was powerful odd that they happened to do so, but there’s been powerfuller odder things in your ’sperience as well as mine. There’s one thing ’bout it that I don’t like.”

“What’s that?”

“The way the Antelope and the varmint come onto you is so odd that he is sartin the Great Spirit fetched the thing ’round on purpose--consequently he isn’t going to give up the gal without a big fight.”

“And he need not wait for that,” exclaimed

the excited youth ; "all I want is to give him a chance ; it won't take long to settle the question."

The fierce indignation of Ashbridge was not lost upon Kenton. It affected the matters he had under consideration.

"Where do you think they are?" asked Ashbridge, controlling his emotions. Kenton chuckled in his peculiar way as he answered :

"Nobody but the party themselves can tell you that, but my belief is that the Antelope is pushing toward the Wyandot towns with the gal he calls the Flower of the Woods and hopes to make his bride."

"Those towns are a long way off, Kenton."

"Yes ; his town is more than two hundred miles to the north, above the Muskinjum, and way up toward Lake Erie."

"We can easily overtake them before they travel half or a quarter of the distance."

Rather singularly, the ranger made no response to the declaration. If the truth must be confessed, he was meditating upon a scheme for getting rid of the ardent youth. The

reader, however, need not be reminded that Kenton felt a strong attachment for Ashbridge, and there was none whom he would have preferred for a companion under other circumstances.

But in the pursuit of the Antelope, the abductor of his beloved, the heart of the youth would be too much involved. His judgment would be weakened; more than likely he would defeat the most carefully-laid and executed plan for the rescue of Agnes Altman.

"I overheard a few words," said Kenton, speaking the truth, "when I was hanging 'round Red Bird's party, that had to do with the Antelope. I couldn't catch the run of 'em, and I'm hopeful I kin pick up something more. You can see, younker, that we can't do a thing afore daylight, for we don't know and can't larn till sunup; but atween now and then it's possible that I may catch somethin' worth larnin', so s'pose you make yourself comfortable here while I try the same thing over agin."

"Why not let me go with you, Kenton?"

"Do you understand Shawanoe?"

“No, but—”

“Then I would have to explain everything we happened to hear, and while I was doing that they might say something I oughter hear—so you see that would be a loss of time and won’t work. No—wait here until an hour after sunup, and if I don’t come by that time, go on to the block-house and get Boone, if he is there, or some of the boys, to help you.”

“You speak as though there is doubt about your returning,” remarked Ashbridge in surprise.

“This bisness of ours is onsartin,” was the significant comment of the ranger; “there’s no saying what may happen; there’ll come a time when you and me meet and part for the last time; this may be it; if I’m not back here an hour after sunup, as I said, go to the block-house, as I told you, after Boone or some of the boys. I’m off; good-bye.”

It is not worth while to dwell upon the suspense suffered by George Ashbridge during the rest of the night and well into the next forenoon. He did not sleep a moment, though,

aware of the long time he had to wait, he tried to lose himself in slumber.

For one, two, three and more hours after the breaking of day he lingered in the neighborhood, awaiting the return of Simon Kenton, but he came not. At last, in desperation, Ashbridge exclaimed :

“Something has happened to him ! his hour at last has come ; precious time has already been lost ; I will make all haste to the block-house and learn whether it is still possible to do anything.”

He was striding along the trail on the way to carry out this resolve, when, as related elsewhere, he was overtaken by Jethro Juggens, to whom he told what he knew about the disappearance of Agnes and Kenton.

“What yo’ gwine to do when yo’ got to de block-house?” asked his dusky friend.

“Blessed if I know ! I’ll appeal to Boone, if he is there, or Captain Bushwick, to form a party to see whether anything can be done to help Agnes or Kenton.”

“No need ob dat ; I’m hyah ; I’ll look after bofe.”

"You mean well, Jethro, and you have done good service, but you are powerless now."

"How do yo' make out dat, Marse George, when yo' don't know my plan?"

"What is it?"

"Somethin' am wrong wid Kenton, dat's plain; darfore de fust ting I'll do will be to snatch him away from de Shawanoes; den him and me will jine forces and grab Miss Agnes de same way. Wat's yo'r 'pinion ob de scheme, Marse Geerge?"

The young man shook his head and resumed, at a slower pace, his walk toward the fort; there, he felt, was the only hope left for him.

But Jethro Juggens was in earnest. He believed that Simon Kenton was in sore trouble and that he alone could help him, and, furthermore, that he would do it; and, incredible as it may seem, he was right in each particular.

CHAPTER XIV.

PUSHING NORTHWARD.

WHEN it is stated that Simon Kenton's theory regarding the vanishment of Agnes Altman, while in charge of George Ashbridge, was correct, the reader will understand from the utterances of the ranger a good deal that otherwise would have little meaning.

There came one autumn day to the block-house on the Ohio side of the river a young Wyandot warrior, known to the whites and among his own people as the Antelope. He was exceedingly comely in appearance, graceful, modest, and with a pleasing regularity of feature and a winning personality not often seen in the American race. He was given welcome by the garrison, for he was known not only as a friendly Indian, but one who on several occasions had done good service to the

exposed settlements and frontier cabins of the pioneers. He was held in much the same regard as the famous Shawanoe, Deerfoot, whose exploits have been told elsewhere.

The visit, which lasted a couple of days, would have ended and passed without anything worthy of mention, but for a complication no more expected by others than by the young warrior himself. He fell hopelessly in love with Agnes Altman, who in the poetical language of his people, he named the Flower of the Woods.

The necessity which compelled the families of the pioneers to turn back from the clearing, where the two cabins had been erected on the Kentucky shore, so crowded them when they took quarters at the block-house that a temporary structure was erected in which the Altmans and Ashbridges made their home. Mr. Altman was so attracted by the appearance and manner of the Antelope, no less than by the commendation of the rangers, that he invited him to spend what time he passed under a roof within his home. The young Wyandot gratefully accepted the invitation.

It was the nature of the gentle Agnes to aid her mother in doing what she could to please her dusky visitor. She accepted his ardent gratitude as natural to him, and did not suspect the truth until after every one else had observed it. The Antelope spoke English with surprising correctness, and in that respect held a marked advantage over any one else of his race, who might be similarly enmeshed in the silken cords.

To George Ashbridge, and the rest of his friends, the glowing admiration of the young Wyandot was a source of interested amusement. They rallied Agnes upon the conquest she had made, and never dreaming of the incidents that followed some months later, warned her to be on her guard lest the loving swain did not snatch her up bodily and carry her off to his distant home.

Agnes received all this with a smile, but she could not feel as the others did. She knew what a serious matter it was to the youthful warrior, and she pitied him profoundly. She understood the meaning of the sacred passion of love (for had she not given her heart to

her own George?), and she trembled at the thought of what she would suffer if called to surrender him or if forced to look into those dark hazel eyes and not see the responsive light that as yet had never failed to be kindled by her glance. She treated the Wyandot with the utmost consideration, gently, but kindly, repelled his advances, and when, on the second day, the impetuous avowal came from his lips, and he insisted that he should be allowed to pluck the Flower of the Woods to grace his own wigwam, she told him, with earnest, sympathetic words, that it could never be.

He persevered, despite her refusal, and then she made known to him what she would have preferred should remain a secret so far as he was concerned; her heart already belonged to another, and she would die before proving false to him. She forbade the Antelope ever to speak of love to her.

Her words could not have been more decided. The Wyandot saw the truth, and was crushed and broken. Without a word, he strode out of the cabin and disappeared in the

woods, as though he never again would look upon her.

Daniel Boone and Simon Kenton were at the block-house at the time, and their knowledge of Indian character caused them to agree upon one thing; that was not the last of the Antelope; he would be heard from again. When he left the fort so abruptly there were feelings in his heart beside disappointment and despair. He was not altogether hopeless. Civilized people are not the only ones who believe in violence, force and barbarity; the same traits are sometimes found among savages. The Wyandot would not be content to see a pale face take the Flower of the Woods to his bosom. He would attempt to steal her from him, and, failing in that, would seek to strike down the possessor of the priceless treasure. So henceforth, not Agnes alone, but George Ashbridge, must be on his guard.

The youth treated lightly these warnings of Boone and Kenton. He had no fear of the Wyandot, who, if he meditated evil toward either, would not be allowed a second opportunity to attempt it against them.

The weeks and months passed, and nothing was seen or heard of the Antelope. His visit had ceased to be a subject of gossip, and was forgotten by many, but one afternoon he reappeared with a companion older than himself and of forbidding looks. He was a powerful, active Wyandot, addressed as Mocha-wen-quā, signifying Between-the-Rocks. The two remained one night, making their quarters in the block-house.

On this brief visit the Antelope was another person. He was as courteous as a knight of the Crusades to Agnes, was pleasant to her friends, and especially so to George Ashbridge. While his admiration of the young woman was undisguised, it was not unpleasantly so. He uttered no word of love and hinted at no wish to pluck the Flower of the Woods; he seemed content that that bliss should fall to him who had won her heart before he met her.

Both Agnes and George would have been convinced of the sincerity of the Antelope but for the warning of Kenton.

“You’ll hear from that varmint agin,” he

said after his departure. "He brought that other Wyandot with him to help look 'round and larn things."

"What did he wish to learn more than he knew before?" asked Ashbridge while standing apart with the hunter, Boone at that time being in Boonesborough, the settlement named for him.

"Lots of things that'll help the snake when he is ready to strike, which may not be for weeks or months."

What plans the Antelope was meditating as concerned Agnes and Ashbridge of course can never be known, but that the Wyandot brooded over his bitter disappointment until he had formed some desperate scheme is certain, and doubtless it would have soon reached its culmination, when a singular perversity of events changed the whole order of the plot.

The Antelope and Between-the-Rocks were stealing through the dense forest of Southern Ohio, with the probable intention of carrying out their plan, when they reached the water outlet of the cavern, as it may be called, a few minutes after Ashbridge and Agnes had

emerged therefrom. More cautious than the fugitives, they hid their presence for a time before the young woman detected the stealthy footsteps.

It must have been as Kenton reasoned: the Antelope would have been only too eager to slay his successful rival in the dark, but he knew the Flower of the Woods would be so horrified by the deed, that she could never look upon him except with abhorrence, so it was that the youth was permitted to stumble and pass on unharmed, while his companion was seized with lightning-like quickness by an arm that passed around her waist, while a hand was held so forcibly over her mouth that the outcry she strove to make was smothered in the utterance.

It was Mocha-wen-quā who took upon himself the active part of abductor, the Antelope having relieved him of his rifle in order that his powerful arms should be free. With their knowledge of the woods and their experience, they made astonishing progress, and while the distracted Ashbridge stood wildly listening for some clue for the right direc-

tion to follow, they passed far beyond his reach.

The dainty figure of the half-conscious woman was carried as though she were an infant for a distance of fully two hundred yards. Then she was placed upon her feet, while her captor gripped her arm too firmly for her to think of trying to escape.

Up to this time, and for several hours later, the captive had not a suspicion that she was in the hands of a couple of Wyandots. She knew there were two, for they occasionally exchanged words, and, when they crossed a little patch of clearing, where the faint moonlight fell upon them, she plainly saw their shadowy figures.

Knowing nothing of either the Wyandot or Shawanoe tongue, she had no means of identifying either when the sparing words were uttered, and the dim light gave her no glimpse of their dress or features.

The Antelope walked a few paces to the rear, as though in fear of pursuit, a fact that was shown by occasional brief halts on the part of Mocha-wen-quah, who for a time held

his grip so strongly that she suffered from the pain. This gradually improved as the distance from the supposed danger increased. Finally the Wyandot took away his hand, and allowed her to walk in peace, though he kept nigh enough to seize her on the instant it might become necessary.

It was creditable to Agnes Altman that throughout this terrifying ordeal she neither fainted nor lost command of her senses. It was a shock at first like death itself, but the fact that no harm was offered her, and that she suffered nothing beyond the vise-like grasp on her arm, convinced her that her life was in no immediate danger. She was even allowed to retain her hold upon her small rifle.

It will be understood that when she was placed upon her feet and permitted to walk, it was in her power to utter a loud outcry, since even a trained athlete would find it hard to hold a lady's mouth closed, and retain a grip upon her arm, while picking their way through the roughest kind of wood at night.

But when free, the young woman held her

peace, impelled thereto by two good and sufficient reasons. At the first appeal for help, her captors would check it with a rigor that would prevent any repetition on her part; and again, if George Ashbridge heard the cry, he would dash to the spot without a thought of the peril to himself. He was one, and here were two active, powerful Indian warriors, adepts in all manner of woodcraft, who would make him pay dearly for his temerity. If Ashbridge had had a companion, like Kenton or Boone, the voice of the prisoner would have rung through the woods in tones that must have penetrated a long distance in the stillness of the darkness.

So it was that Agnes held her lips mute, more from consideration for her betrothed than for herself.

The progress through the forest at times was difficult and laborious. The Wyandots drew away from the rocky section where the fugitives met with their most serious adventures, and although the ground greatly improved, it more than once compelled detours, and required great care to prevent stumbling.

The natural expectation of Agnes was that her captors were making their way back to the main company that was somewhere in the neighborhood, but when fully two hours passed without bringing to sight the first glimmer of a camp fire, and without the exchange of a signal between them and other parties, she knew she was mistaken. The conviction came in the nature of a partial relief, for she dreaded unspeakably being taken into a camp of a dozen or more Shawanoes, where, under the glare of the flames she would be subjected to a trying scrutiny, and perhaps to indignity; for among so many it was more than likely that some would show her less consideration than that received heretofore from her captors.

All through her trial she was buoyed by a hope that would have sustained few in her situation. Her thoughts naturally traveled back to George, and it was even a part of her delicate and highly-wrought nature to feel a tender sympathy for the brave fellow who was so eager at all times to risk his life for her. She could comprehend the shock that over-

came him when he learned that she had been snatched almost from his side.

“What will he do?” was the question she pondered and answered in many ways. Surely he would soon rally from the blow and rouse himself to action. He would understand that he could do nothing except with help, and would seek that. Without waiting for daylight, he would hasten to the block-house and secure the aid of some of the rangers there, always ready for a venture of this kind. Knowing the precise spot, as may be said, where she had been abducted, he could guide them thither, and those experienced woodmen would take the trail and follow it like so many bloodhounds. Two warriors and herself must of necessity leave footprints which could be readily followed.

All this was in a measure a pleasant occupation for her mind, but the reader need not be reminded that in this respect the young woman was wide of the mark. Nothing of the kind took place, though, at a much later hour than she had in mind, the belated Ashbridge set out for the frontier post.

In crossing a natural clearing several rods in area Agnes glanced around at the Indian who was following her. He shrank back as if seeking to avoid scrutiny, but she saw enough to show that he had a blanket wrapped about his shoulders. This was unusual. The season was warm, and among all the Shawanoes observed since leaving the block-house none carried the extra garment with him. The discovery, however, caused her no uneasiness.

When another hour had passed without bringing them to the camp of the main party, the captive was convinced that her custodians held no intention of taking her thither. They were tramping northward on their return to their native towns or villages. In this respect, as will be recalled, she was not far from the truth.

Agnes had done a good deal of walking since leaving her home, and though, like most of her sex on the frontier, she possessed a splendid physique, the strain began to tell. She was fatigued, and her captors must be aware of it.

When she was on the point of appealing to them, the rest unexpectedly came. They descended a sloping bank, and, emerging from the wood, paused on the bank of a stream, perhaps a hundred yards in width, and which was one of the numerous winding tributaries of the Ohio.

That this was the point at which the warriors were aiming was proven by their actions. The immediate custodian of Agnes moved a few paces to the right and drew a canoe from under a clump of bushes, where they had evidently left it when coming from the opposite direction.

"They intend to cross in the boat, or perhaps make a voyage of several miles in it," thought the prisoner, in dismay, "and then how will George and the rest follow our trail?"

The other Indian, holding his blanket close about his shoulders, so as to fully conceal his face, stepped apart and talked a few minutes with his companion. The latter soon returned to Agnes and motioned for her to enter the canoe. She obeyed, and seated herself near

the further end. Instead of following her or pushing the craft from shore, the warrior took out the paddle, walked back to the edge of the wood, and sat down. The other disappeared among the trees.

Agnes interpreted this as meaning that she should rest herself. Her mind was in a tumult of emotion, but so great was her fatigue of body that she soon closed her eyes, and did not open them until the sun was shining.

Looking around and recognizing her surroundings, she saw that one of the warriors was broiling a haunch of venison over a fire that apparently had been burning a good while. His companion, standing near, without his blanket and with folded arms, was gazing fixedly at her, who, with a start, recognized him as her old admirer, the Wyandot, known as the Antelope.

CHAPTER XV.

A WOODLAND WOOING.

THE Wyandots known as the Antelope and Between-the-Rocks having penetrated the forests to a point so far north that all fear of pursuit was gone, halted on the edge of the stream where they had left their canoe. When they found it undisturbed, all misgiving was removed. It was safe to remain where they were until long after the morrow's sun had risen, for they could take to their boat a good while before the fleetest of wood rangers could track them to the spot, and "water leaves no trail."

The Wyandots saw that their captive needed rest. They would have halted long before but for their wish to reach the place where they had left their canoe. That done, the halt was no longer delayed.

The Antelope had noted the inquiring looks

of Agnes directed toward him, and, desirous of hiding his identity as long as he could, refrained from offering her the use of his blanket, which he had brought from his home with the vague hope that it might serve the Flower of the Woods, which he had set out to pluck for his wigwam.

He went into the forest after game, directing his companion to prepare the fire with which to broil it. The wearied Agnes sank into slumber, which, as has been told, lasted unbroken until the sun was well above the horizon.

While she was sleeping, the Antelope had respectfully approached the canoe and gently laid his blanket at the feet of her whom he adored. Then, as her eyes still remained closed, he stepped back, folded his arms, and looked down in the beauteous countenance with a fervor of admiration that was akin to worship itself. Thus rapt in emotion, he stood when Agnes opened her eyes, rose from her half-reclining position, and looked across and up in the face of the Wyandot.

On the instant the truth flashed upon her.

Instead of falling into the hands of the Shawanoes, she had been taken prisoner by these two members of another tribe. They must have acted independently of the party that had driven them into the cavern and then tried to burn them out.

In that single glance, too, Agnes recalled the former visits, and especially the last one, made by the Antelope to her home at the block-house. She recognized his present companion as the one who accompanied the handsome warrior at that time, and the words of Simon Kenton seemed to be ringing in her ears.

But her woman's instinct warned her to be on her guard. Her dusky lover now had the upper hand, and it would be dangerous to anger him.

"Good morning," she said, with an attempt at cheeriness which could hardly deceive him. "I did not expect to meet the Antelope so far from his home as well as my own."

"The Flower of the Woods has slept well; the Antelope has kept away danger while she slept; his heart is glad that she awakes again."

Agnes stepped ashore. The Antelope sprang forward to assist her, but she was too quick. Her health and strength were so superb that she felt no discomfort from the constrained position she had held so long, nor from the wetting of her garments hours before, though she missed her morning toilet, and the greetings and companionship of her friends—the latter, alas! more than she could tell.

“Let the Flower of the Woods follow the bank of the stream to where the tall hickory bends over the river; on the other side she will find a cool spring that will run forever sweet after she touches her lips to it.”

Agnes could afford to forget this high-flown compliment in her thankfulness at the consideration of the admiring Wyandot. She inclined her head and murmured her acknowledgment, as she passed him, soon disappearing from his sight.

Had she dared she would have taken her rifle with her instead of leaving it in the canoe, and had she kept the weapon in hand she would have made a dash for liberty the

moment she was beyond the gaze of her captors. She could run rapidly, and since they would be compelled to study her trail in order to keep up the pursuit, she felt little fear of not being able to elude them.

But she was wise. She was a long distance from home and was astray. Probably it would take her several days and nights to reach the old trail, or the Ohio river, which would serve her equally well as a guide. To attempt this without a weapon at her command was not to be thought of, for in addition to the need of procuring food was the ever-present danger of meeting some of Red Bird's band, whom she dreaded far more than the two Wyandots who were now her custodians.

Agnes drank from the cool crystal spring, bathed her face and temples, and, as was her custom, spent a few minutes in prayer. Looking around her in the woods, she was confident that no human eye saw her. The temptation to flee was strong, but she resolutely put it behind her, and sauntered back to camp, as it may be termed, as though such a thought had not entered her head.

Between-the-Rocks had done his duty well. The thin slices of the best venison that could be selected from the victim of the Antelope's marksmanship had been "done to a turn," and were supported on a number of broad green leaves which rested on the edge of a boulder a couple of feet high that served admirably as a table. The tempting odor of broiling meat was in the air, and was grateful to the young woman, who was keenly ahungered.

She again bowed and uttered her thanks, as she took her seat on the rock, and ate of the nourishing food. Between-the-Rocks and the Antelope also ate, but at several paces distant, and with their faces turned away that she might not feel any embarrassment.

Agnes dreaded the stepping into the canoe and pushing away from shore, for she was confident that the Antelope did not intend merely to cross, but would go a long distance, perhaps, in the boat. That would render it impossible for her friends to trail her beyond the present point. It was to her interest, therefore, to delay movements as long as she could.

When the meal was completed—and it need not be said that she did not hasten matters—and she saw that the Antelope wished to resume the conversation that had been checked, she encouraged the purpose by sitting on the edge of the rock that had served her for a table and looking expectantly toward him. He was quick to accept the invitation.

In the canoe, drawn slightly up the bank, rested paddle, blanket, and the light weapon of the captive. Between-the-Rocks, having finished his meal, was smoking his red clay pipe, seated on the ground, with his face turned toward the stream. Thus placed, he was not looking at the two on his right, and yet he would have perceived any unusual movement by either. The two rifles reclined against another boulder only a few feet away.

The Antelope sauntered from the little fire to the rock, where Agnes looked invitingly up in his face. She saw the handsome countenance, undefiled by paint, flush deeper at this concentration of gaze; but he veiled his agitation by an effort, and, halting at a respectful distance, folded his arms and looked

down at her with an expression of fervent admiration and passion.

"Can the Antelope do anything to please the Flower of the Woods?" he asked in a voice so soft and low and musical that it must have thrilled the heart of any dusky maiden whose ears caught the tones.

Agnes, with the instinct of her sex, saw that she could trifle more with that voice than any one else. She did not hesitate to indulge in a saucy smile and reply :

"Yes, Wyandot, there's one thing I am waiting for you to do ; I wish you to take me home."

The warrior was not unprepared for this, and made apt reply :

"The Antelope did not take the Flower from her home."

"No ; he never could do that ; but she was trying to make her way there when he took her away."

"It was Mocha-wen-quah, not the Antelope, who plucked the Flower."

This was too palpable a subterfuge for the young woman to accept.

"But Mocha-wen-quah did it to please the Antelope, and therefore it was the same as if the Antelope did it."

"She was not harmed, nor was the paleface injured."

"And why should he have been?" Agnes made haste to ask. "He is the friend of the Flower, as you choose to call me."

"He is the enemy of the red man."

"Not of the Antelope, for he is the friend of the white man, and therefore they must be friends to each other."

The black eyes of the Wyandot emitted an ominous flash, but with remarkable control he kept his voice at the same low, bewitching key.

"It is the will of the Great Spirit that the Flower of the Woods should bloom in the wigwam of the Antelope; it was the Great Spirit that guided the Antelope to the spot, when she came from the house under the ground, so that he was able to save her from the Shawanoes."

It was evident the young warrior looked upon his arrival at the critical moment as

specially directed by the One whom we worship.

“That may be,” said Agnes, “and I will always feel grateful that you and Mocha-wenqua saved me from the fierce Shawanoes; but if the Great Spirit meant that you should do this, why does not the Antelope do all He wishes him to do?”

“What is that?” he demanded.

“That the Antelope should take her to her friends.”

“How does the Flower of the Woods know that?”

“How does the Antelope know He meant him to save me from the red men that had driven us into the cavern?”

“Because the Antelope was led there at the right moment.”

“But he was not led there.”

“He was left to do as his heart urged him; that was to pluck the Flower of the Woods and take her to his lodge toward the great waters.”

“But it is the will of the Flower to go back to her home and her friends; it grieves her heart that the Antelope delays her going.”

“Her heart should not be grieved, for the Antelope loves her.”

“You told me all this many moons ago, Antelope,” said Agnes, with grave earnestness, “and I told you it could never be.”

“The Antelope loves the Flower of the Woods,” repeated the dusky admirer, with glowing face and eager eyes.

“But, Wyandot, how can I love you when my heart is given to another, as I explained to you long ago?”

Since the Antelope ventured to argue the question with his captive, the latter wielded a ready tongue, and made no effort to conceal her impatience.

“The Antelope will win the heart of the Flower; he will hunt the woods for game for her; he will bring her much wampum; the softest skins of the fox, the bear, and the buffalo shall be her couch: she shall do no toil; all shall bow down at her feet, and she shall be queen of the Wyandots.”

“But, Antelope, that cannot be, for we are of different blood.”

“Does not the good man, the missionary,

say that we are all children of the same Father?"

"And Mr. Finley speaks the truth; we are all children of the Great Father; so is the black man and woman, and yet the red people do not consort with them; no more can I ever consort with you, Wyandot."

It was a plain, direct, abrupt refusal, but no more than the warrior had received when a suppliant at the block-house months before. It would be strange that now, when every advantage was his, he should accept such a repulse as final.

A little fearful that she had been too pointed under the changed conditions, Agnes added, before he could respond:

"You have told me again that you love me, and I cannot doubt it, for the Antelope speaks with a single tongue; then, if you love me more than any one else in the world, you should strive first of all to do that which will please me."

Vain essay of the female mind! Woeful mistake, made myriads of times in the past, and it shall be made numberless times in the

years to come, so long as the world shall last; for when one appeals to the unselfishness of love, it is to the essence of selfishness itself.

“When a few more moons come and go the Flower of the Woods will read aright the will of the Great Spirit, which she now reads in a wrong light. She will see that they are intended for each other.”

“Who gave you this wondrous knowledge, O Wyandot, that you dare speak for the Great Spirit?” demanded Agnes, sitting erect and looking full into the face of the young warrior. Her feelings were wrought to a high pitch, and her manner and appearance showed her anger. Not only was it impatience with the sophistry of the dusky wooer, but it was a feeling of loyalty to the absent one—him who held her heart’s affections, as he would forever—which thrilled her with a courage that quailed not at death itself.

The Antelope recoiled a step, but did not shrink from meeting her fiery gaze and making instant reply:

“It is the Great Spirit himself who gives the Antelope the knowledge of his will.”

“Not so! You have committed a sin; you have done me a grievous wrong; the Great Spirit is displeased; he frowns upon the Antelope; he turns away his face, because he seeks harm to the one who never harmed him. You have the power, Wyandot, to take me to your lodge, for you are stronger than I, but my heart will be broken; when the Flower of the Woods is planted in the wigwam of the Antelope she will droop and die.”

Mocha-wen-quah, seated some distance away on a rock, stolidly smoking his pipe, uttered a slight sound, which caused the Antelope to turn like a flash and look inquiringly at him. The elder warrior did not speak or move limb or head. He simply shot his glittering eyes for an instant down stream. The furtive glance said as plainly as words could have done: “Look there and you will see danger.”

Agnes Altman was facing in that direction, and saw that which startled Between-the-Rocks at the same moment that he observed it. A canoe was coming around the bend, impelled by a single paddle, though the frail craft contained two persons. At the instant

it darted into sight, the grim sentinel with his pipe uttered the warning to the Antelope.

None of the three surveyed the approaching boat with more interest than Agnes. With a quickening throb she saw that while the one swaying the paddle was an Indian, his companion was a white man. Something in his appearance seemed familiar, and she rose to her feet, in the instinctive effort to discern more clearly. With the action, as may be said, she recognized him as J. B. Finley, the famous missionary, while his companion was no less a personage than Wa-on-mon, known along the frontier as the Panther, the terrible war chief of the Shawanoes.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PANTHER'S DECISION.

MINGLED emotions were caused on the part of Agnes Altman when she recognized the occupants in the approaching canoe as the missionary Finley and the dreaded Shawanoe war chieftain, Wa-on-mon or the Panther.

The man of God well earned the fragrant reputation he won in the early history of the West, as a devoted, self-sacrificing laborer in his Master's vineyard. As we have said, he literally carried for months and years his life in his hands. He tramped hundreds of miles through the unbroken wilderness, paddling his canoe up the lonely streams, sleeping in the open woods, caring naught for summer's fiery glow nor the piercing snow and blasts of winter. He visited the hostile tribes, and many a time, when he lay down in the wig-

wam of the Shawanoe, or Wyandot, or Pottawatomie, it was with the conviction that he would never again see the sun rise—that the knife of the vengeful hostile would be driven into his heart, and he would be another of the many innocent victims to the sins of others of his own race.

But the missionary never faltered in his blessed work, which carried with it the sweetest reward that can come to mortal man—the consciousness that he was pleasing his Master, and that whatever befell him in this world, all would be well in the world to come. What to him, therefore, were storm and heat, hunger and pain, woe and sorrow, life and death? So he went about his sacred task, content to await God's own time to call him hence, and lived to see the West teeming with settlements, villages, towns and cities, and to die a peaceful, happy death at a green old age, leaving a memory behind him which has proved a benison to after generations.

It need not be said that Agnes Altman loved the missionary with a respect and reverence which no other being could inspire,

and her heart gave a throb of deep joy when her eyes rested upon the massive frame, with its mild, beaming countenance and expression of charity, sweetness and good-will.

But what of the Panther? She had had more than one stirring experience with him during the past year, and knew what a terrific scourge he had been to the border. Once she cut the bonds that bound him when a prisoner on the flatboat, and, in turn, he had sought the life of George Ashbridge, and (though she knew it not) had meditated burying his knife in her breast.

He and Simon Kenton had been the fiercest of mortal enemies for years, seeking each other's lives, like a couple of rival tigers in the jungle. They had met in deadly conflict, each thrilled by an intensity of hate beyond the reach of imagination, and yet, at the moment when the great ranger held the Shawanoe at his mercy, the conqueror, yielding to that divine prompting which is never wholly silent in any breast, had given the conquered back his life and let him go unharmed.

The Panther had never appeared at the block-house, for he was still the implacable foe of the white man, and the pioneers that had been brought in contact with him knew nothing of his later movements or doings. Missionary Finley, when at the post, was sometimes questioned, but was unable, or he may have chosen to give no satisfactory information.

Nothing was clearer than that, although the missionary and chieftain were comrades for the time, the Shawanoe was the master; it was his wish that would prevail in the critical event at hand. The uncertainty as to the mood of the Panther was the source of the misgiving on the part of Agnes Altman.

Wa-on-mon sat a little in front of the centre of the boat, using the ashen paddle first on one side and then on the other, with that deliberate power which proved his unsurpassable skill in the use of the implement. He faced the bow of the craft, and his painted countenance, with its strong features and vivid personality, was clearly shown in the strong sunlight.

The missionary was near the stern, his face plainly speaking his surprise at the sight of the group on shore. With the quick intuition gained by years of training, he suspected a part of the truth, and suggested in a low tone to his companion that they should land and look into the matter. The suggestion was unnecessary, for the Panther had already turned the bow of the craft toward the land.

The appearance of the new-comers was a surprise to the Antelope and Between-the-Rocks. Had the former suspected that anything of the kind was likely, he would have made sure that his party were invisible and that no signs were left to draw the attention of the Panther. It was too late for that, however, and the Wyandot was wise in putting on the best face possible and greeting the visitors as though they were welcome friends.

Agnes Altman went further. Springing lightly from the rock, she ran down to the water's margin and met the canoe.

"Wa-on-mon, how do you do?" she asked, with a smile and the offer of her hand. Drop-

ping his paddle, he stepped ashore, and then accepted the tiny hand that was offered him, but there was just enough hesitation to rob the act of its graciousness, and he did not speak. He bestowed one quick glance upon the young woman, and then strode on to meet the two Wyandots.

This cleared the path between her and the missionary, who, stepping from the canoe, passed one of his brawny arms around the comely shoulders, and implanted an affectionate kiss upon the willing cheek of Agnes.

"I ought always to be glad to see you, my child," he said, in his cheery fashion, "but this meeting causes me anxiety."

"And I fear there is reason for it, Mr. Finley, for you need not be told that I am here unwillingly."

"How did it come about?" he asked, taking her hand, and leading her to another rock removed at least fifty feet from the Panther and the Wyandot.

She told him the story of the past twenty-four hours, doing it with a quick completeness which left nothing to be added. He listened

attentively without interruption until she was through.

“It is a remarkable complication, a strange series of events, the like of which I have never known before. It will cause your friends great anxiety, for your failure to return must mean your inability to do so. I hope their suspense will not continue long.”

“I am bewildered when I recall what has taken place in so short a time. What do you suppose George has done?”

“I can only guess, my child; it seems to me he must have seen that he was powerless to do anything for you without help, and has made haste to the block-house for that help.”

“How can it be turned to account?”

“There are always men there who can follow a trail with the skill of an Indian. They will meet with little difficulty in following you to this spot.”

“But that will take much time.”

“Yes; if he hastens to the post so as to leave there with his friends at daylight, they have hardly reached the point where you were captured by this time. But he will be

so disturbed by your loss that I doubt whether he will leave the vicinity before morning. In that case they can not be here much before nightfall."

"You speak, Mr. Finley, as though there is need of their coming," said Agnes, in alarm.

"I do not know, my child, whether such need exists."

"But what of the Panther? Is he an enemy of mine?"

The benevolent face took on a troubled expression.

"Wa-on-mon causes me much distress of mind. Many times I have been hopeful that he was meditating seriously of the change of heart that must come to him before his future is secure. He has thought a great deal of it, as his words showed, but his hatred of our race is so fierce that nothing except divine grace can change it."

"And yet he is a friend to you."

"I am not always certain of that, my child," was the astonishing reply of the missionary; "you will be shocked when I tell you that when I have lain down to sleep in his wig-

wam, as well as when he stood watch for a few hours while I slept in the woods, he has spent the time in debating with himself whether to slay or allow me to slumber on—and yet all this is true.”

Agnes showed in her looks the amazed grief this news caused her.

“And yet,” added the good man, with a smile, “I never allowed such a trifle to interfere with my rest. God has protected me thus far, and whatever may be His will in the future I am content, for He doeth all things well.”

“You have driven away the hope that came with the sight of you and the Panther,” said the captive, deeply depressed.

“I have no wish to do that, for I won’t deny that I feel hope myself.”

“The Panther was cool, and almost repulsed me when I greeted him.”

“You know his people are not demonstrative in their nature. It was a good deal for him to take your hand at all. If I am not mistaken, Agnes, the Antelope has shown great admiration for you.”

The cheek of the maiden flushed, but she replied promptly :

“It is true ; he came to our home last autumn and avowed it so strongly that I told him it could do him no good, as I am the promised wife of another.”

“That was right, my child ; you did your duty, and what since then ?”

“He came again with his present companion, Between-the-Rocks.”

“I know him well,” remarked the missionary in a low voice, with a glance at the middle-aged warrior ; “he is a bad man, cunning, revengeful and treacherous. We must beware of him. But I interrupted you.”

“We did not see the Antelope again for months. Then he presented himself at our house, as I just told you, with Between-the-Rocks. He acted so sensibly that George and I believed he had gotten over his infatuation, but Mr. Kenton told us it was not so, and warned us to be on our guard against him.”

“Events have proven that Simon was right. Very rarely does he make a mistake in such matters. I can see from the manner of the

Antelope," added the missionary, with a furtive look at the Panther and the Wyandot, "that he is much in earnest. They are talking in Wyandot, but from a word or two that I have caught, the Antelope is pleading for permission to take you to his home with him."

"And what says the Panther?" eagerly asked Agnes.

"He says very little and speaks so low that I haven't been able to hear a word, but he is listening closely."

"Shall I not go to him and add my prayer?" said the maiden, in a tremor of agitation and distress.

The missionary shook his head.

"By no means; it would be the worst thing you could do, and probably would cause him to decide against you."

"But you—surely you can say something for me."

"You know how gladly I would do anything in my power, but I may safely claim to understand the chieftain better than most people, and that I refrain from doing as you wish is because I know it is for your good."

Raise your heart in prayer, my child, as I have done repeatedly since joining you."

"Oh, how often I have done that, Mr. Finley! We can only hope and wait for the issue, whatever it may be."

Now that it was apparent to both that the all-important question was under discussion and soon to be decided, the missionary and the young woman could feel no interest in conversation, but turned their gaze upon the two who were too much absorbed in each other to notice the attention of the whites.

Between-the-Rocks had not changed his position since lighting his pipe. He sat puffing with the deliberation of one who fully enjoyed the nicotine and cared for nothing else. But the black, beady eyes, flitting hither and thither and never at rest, did not lose the slightest feature of the singular scene.

The Panther, without giving a thought to the matter, had assumed a pose that was striking in its picturesqueness. When he laid down the paddle of his canoe he picked up his rifle and carried it with him. Resting the stock on the ground between him and the

young Wyandot, he folded his arms across the muzzle, rested his chin upon them, and glowered unflinchingly into the face of the handsome young warrior while he grimly listened to his pleadings. He supported most of his weight on the right moccasin, the left leg being slightly bent at the knee. The black hair dangling about the shoulders and cheeks, the Roman nose, the high cheekbones, the broad mouth, drawn down at the corners, the habitual scowl, the naked chest, the low forehead, the eyes as bright and gleaming as those of a rattlesnake, and the weird splashes of white, red, and black paint on the countenance, with the moral background made by his reputation as one of the most terrific fighters of his race—these were of that overwhelming force that not for a moment did the wild thought of gainsaying his decision enter the brain of the Antelope.

The latter was the picture of grace, as he argued his own cause. Many a judge would have yielded because of the winsomeness of the pleader, but this was a detriment in the eyes of the iron chieftain, who regarded it as

evidence of effeminacy. Then, too, the Antelope was under suspicion of being a friend of the pale faces, and that told heavily against him.

In short, no sooner had the handsome young Wyandot stated his case than the Panther made instant decision against him. He disliked the youth to that degree, however, that he would not end his suspense by letting him know the question was settled. He encouraged him to "present his side," and the Antelope, believing that he had a chance of winning, did so with all the fervor, earnestness, and grace at his command.

But the end had to come. The Wyandot finally paused and looked into that frightful countenance for the verdict that to him was more than life itself.

"Does my brother love the Flower of the Woods?" asked the chieftain, raising his head from the support on which it had been resting and assuming the upright posture.

The question must have struck the Antelope as somewhat superfluous, but like a true lover, he was ready with his reply:

“So much, that if I lose the Flower I shall never look up again and—”

“Then you shall look down the rest of your life!” broke in the Panther in a wrathful voice, and with a fierceness of manner that made the Wyandot start backward and tremble. “That red man who would consort with a pale face is a pale face himself. He is a dog, a snake—he is not fit to live.”

The Shawanoe seemed on the point of leaping forward and striking the youth to the earth. The Antelope recoiled further and stared affrightedly at his master, as if on the point of seeking safety in flight. He was fleeter of foot than the chieftain, and might save himself by a sudden dash.

But, if he meditated such a step, it was changed by the action of the Panther himself. Once more he interlocked his forearms over the muzzle of his rifle and rested his chin upon them. With the piercing eyes fixed upon the cowering Antelope, he said slowly, and in a cavernous voice:

“Let the Wyandot go back to his people and tell them that Wa-on-mon did not kill



him because he is a squaw. Let him go quickly, or Wa-on-mon may forget that he is a squaw and think of him only as a dog, and, thinking of him as a dog, sink his tomahawk in his brain. Let him take with him the other squaw and dog, Mocha-wen-quæ; let him go quickly—go!”

CHAPTER XVII.

“I KNEWED IT!”

THE reader will recall that on the same forenoon the events just described were taking place, Jethro Juggens and George Ashbridge held an earnest consultation on the trail leading to the block-house, and decided that the younger should push on to the frontier post in quest of help, with which to pursue and recover Agnes Altman from the Wyandots who had carried her away. He reached this purpose because he saw no other way of accomplishing what he had in mind.

But Jethro could not agree with him. It seemed to him that invaluable time would thus be lost. As he viewed matters, the unexplained absence of Simon Kenton could only mean one thing, which was that he had fallen into grave danger.

“And if dat’s de case, Marse George, Jethro

Juggens am de indiwidooal that is to help him out."

"I cannot see what you can do for him," was the response of Ashbridge.

"Ob course yo' can't, and I can't neither till I larns jes' how he am fixed; den will be de time for me to set things hummin'."

"But we know what a misfortune has befallen Agnes; there is no doubt that she is in the hands of enemies, and she, therefore, should receive every attention. Kenton is able to take care of himself—at least, a good deal better than you can take care of him."

"Dar's whar yo're powerful mistook," was the confident comment of Jethro; "yo' know dat folks will make mistakes at times, and I s'pose yo'll obmit, Marse George, dat yo' obclines dat way now and den."

"Well, do as you please; I have no heart to talk with or listen to you. You seem to be the child of good fortune, and there's no use of my wishing it for you; but when you get through with saving Kenton perhaps you will give some attention to Agnes."

"Who tole yo' 'bout dat?" demanded the astonished African; "dat's de bery idee dat I hab figured out. Marse Kenton am a good man, a bery good man, and I want him to help me when we goes for Miss Agnes; dat's de whole plan I had in mind."

To George Ashbridge all this was dismal comedy, and with a word of good-bye he turned on his heel and strode rapidly toward the block-house. Jethro Juggens kept his place until the other had passed out of sight around a turn in the trail.

"He seems to be cut all up by de umberageous way tings am gwine. Wal, I s'pose it am nat'ral, and I'm sorry for him. Let me see: de fust ting I've got to do am to hunt up Marse Kenton, and ef he's in trouble help him out."

He had turned about and was walking thoughtfully back over the path he had followed several times during the past twenty-four hours. He could not forget that he was in the neighborhood of a large party of Shawanoes, and, whether or not he expected to be of assistance to Simon Kenton, his own safety

demanded that he should proceed with the utmost caution.

He was near the spot where he had brought down the deer, when he was startled by a threatening growl. Instantly halting with his rifle ready for emergency, he saw the explanation of the sound. A big black bear, lumbering through the woods, had scented the venison and was making a feast upon it. He had detected the approach of the negro and raised his head as a warning for him to keep off.

"Humph! I s'pose yo' tinks I'm feared ob yo'," muttered Jethro; "if I hadn't had dinner a little while ago I'd plug yo' and eat yo'."

The temptation was strong to slay the huge creature, and under almost any other circumstances the African would have done so without hesitation. There was no call, however, to shoot the animal, beside which the report of the gun was liable to attract dangerous attention.

"Ef yo' knowed anything yo'd tank me for sparin' yo'," added Jethro making such a long circuit around bruin and his meal that the

brute saw there was no danger of molestation. So he lowered his head and resumed champing the nourishing food. Keeping an eye on him to guard against treachery, the African gradually came back to the trail and moved forward as before.

But this kind of work could accomplish nothing, and his thoughts were busy. It was time he fixed upon a line of action.

His conversation with Ashbridge had made known to Jethro the fact that the Shawanoes who had pressed them so hard were in camp somewhere in the neighborhood. The task of the dusky youth was to find that camp, for the suspicion was strong upon him that Simon Kenton was a prisoner there, or was killed.

His belief was that the ranger was held a captive, for, as has been intimated, Jethro could explain in no other way the long-continued absence of the ranger. Had he been slain, there would have been one or more reports of guns to tell the story.

Obtuse as the servant was in many respects, he was not without a vivid idea of the deli-

cacy and danger of the task before him—that of locating Kenton. That done, it would be time enough to decide upon the next step.

The ranger had warned him of the peculiar peril in which he stood from the Indians. They execrated him more than any white man, and would wreak their fearful hate upon him if he ever fell into their power. The Panther especially abhorred the negro, and would run much personal risk for the sake of repaying the indignities he had suffered at his hands. He advised Jethro to use vigilance at all times and to go upon no excursions which took him into special danger.

While all this was recalled to the youth when threading his course along the trail, it did not lessen his resolution to help the one that had proven himself a brave man and a true friend to him. Jethro was grateful to Kenton, as he was to all who treated him kindly, and never hesitated to go to the utmost length to show that gratitude.

"'Sides," he added, with a burst of self-confidence, which omened ill for success, "Marse Kenton oughter know by dis time

dat I'm able to take keer ob myself; I've proved that."

Jethro did not know, however, in what direction to turn to look for the Shawanoes. He might wander aimlessly about the woods for days without coming upon them. He must secure some point of observation.

Nothing was more certain than that the red men when grouped together had started a camp fire, whose smoke would give the youth the sign for which he was looking. This could be readily observed from some high elevation or the top of a towering tree, and, inasmuch as he was continually surrounded by trees, it may be said that the means was at his command from the first.

Fully impressed with the importance of the business on which he was engaged, Jethro spent some time in hunting, at the same time looking for a section where the ground was more elevated. There was little to be noted in this respect, and after scrutinizing a tall hickory, an ash, and several other varieties, he finally fixed upon a giant oak, as the one most likely to furnish him the perch he sought.

A puzzling question confronted him from the first as to what he should do with his rifle. He had no ready means of fastening it over and behind his shoulders as hunters frequently did in swimming streams or upon occasions when they required the full use of their arms. He might have secured it by putting forth considerable effort, but it would have handicapped him not a little, and was liable to catch among the limbs as he climbed upward.

Now none knew better than Jethro Juggens that one of the first laws of the rangers was never to carry an unloaded gun, and another, equally important, was always to keep that gun in hand or within instant reach. And yet, recalling all this, he was of the opinion that the best thing he could do was to leave his weapon on the ground until he completed his observation.

Peering carefully in all directions in turn, he was able to catch no sign of Indian or wild animal, nor could he believe that any were in the immediate neighborhood. The main argument with Jethro, however, was that, if discovered by any prowling Shawa-

noe, his rifle would be of no use to him, for what more helpless situation can be conceived than that of being caught "up a tree."

"Ef dar ain't no use ob takin' de gun wid me, den what's de use ob takin' it 'long?" was the question which, it may be said, carried its own answer.

Still, it was with a thrill of misgiving that he stepped to a dense bush near at hand and carefully hid it where it would attract the notice of no one in passing; but, having decided that it was the best thing to do, he lost no more time in considering the question.

The oak was three or four feet in diameter and of the species whose limbs grew so near the ground that, by a smart leap, Jethro was able to reach them and draw himself upward. He was pleased, too, to note that the branches above were plentifully furnished with leaves, which were likely to have their use in case of emergency.

Once among the limbs, and Jethro found his task an easy one. His great power and experience from early boyhood in climbing stood him in good stead, and he went nimbly

aloft until so near the top that he could ascend no further.

He could not have made a better selection of a tree for his purpose. He had climbed so high that by parting the branches in front of his face his view was extensive in every direction, and, within the same minute that he began his scrutiny of the sky, he discovered that which he sought.

Off to the northwest and hardly an eighth of a mile distant, a column of smoke was filtering through the tree tops, and could be traced for a long distance against the clear sky before it was dissipated.

"Dat's whar de Shawanoes am!" was the truthful decision of Jethro the moment his eyes caught the signal; "dat's whar de heathen am, dat is," he added as a saving clause, "ef dey ain't somewhar else."

The heavens were scrutinized in all other directions, but nothing of a similar nature could be seen. He was sure his first theory was the correct one.

He felt a certain uneasiness over the fact that he was without his rifle. He had done

that which he had been warned against doing, and which he never had done before. It was this sensation of being in personal danger, though there was no real evidence of it, that caused him to use extra precaution in descending the tree.

He was coming down the oak with the same caution that he had climbed it, when he received a shock that almost caused him to lose his balance and fall to the ground. He heard voices beneath the tree, and a moment's listening left no doubt that they were Shawanoes.

"Dey hab found my gun and am gwine to shoot me!" was the thought that held him terrified and motionless for a few seconds. He expected a hail in broken English, but as the minutes passed without anything of the kind taking place, he gathered sufficient courage to move stealthily a few feet lower, until he was able, through the intervening leaves, to catch the outlines of three warriors, standing directly below him, and talking in their gruff, sententious fashion. He could even catch some of the expressions uttered, but, as they

were in an unknown tongue, they brought no enlightenment.

At first Jethro gave himself up as lost; but as the minutes passed without their looking upward, he began to take hope, especially as he saw that none of them had his gun. It might be, after all, that they had stepped under the oak by accident and were unaware of the prize within their reach.

Such proved to be the fact, for after a brief while the three moved off to the northwest, in the direction of the Shawanoe camp.

"Dat's 'bout de most narrowest 'scape dat dis chile eber had," muttered the youth, with a shudder of relief. "Dat teaches me dat whereber I goes after dis, I takes my gun wid me for a fact."

It is hard to conceive how the possession of his rifle would have materially helped matters, since in the end he would have been at the mercy of his enemies, but Jethro never quite fully forgave himself for what he was convinced was an unpardonable oversight.

Crouching on the uppermost limb, he peered around among the trees in search of the hos-

tiles who were there but a short time before. They had vanished, and, loosing his hold, he dropped to the ground, ran to the bush, and recovered his invaluable weapon.

“Dar! Let ’em come now and de heathen will find me ready!”

Fortunately for the fellow they did not come.

In spite of his great scare he had succeeded in what he attempted; he had located the Shawanoe encampment, and he now began picking his way through the woods toward it, more alive than ever to the perilous nature of the undertaking.

If he made the slightest slip, and his presence became known or was suspected by a single one of the Indians, nothing could save him. He was so impressed by this truth that he called into play a caution and skill that he seldom displayed while in the woods.

Somehow or other he formed the impression that it was less dangerous to approach the camp from the opposite side. When, therefore, he was quite near it he began a guarded flank movement, which occupied con-

siderable time and involved no little danger. He had fixed its location so clearly in his mind that he had no fear of going astray, added to which were sounds that came to him from the point and served as a guide.

"De heathen hab been in de cavern and larned dat de folks ain't dar," thought Jethro, adding, with some shrewdness, "dey hab larned, too, dat dey left in de night time and hab had plenty ob chances to got to de block-house afore sunup, so dey ain't lookin' for dem."

The increasing light and open spaces in his front revealed to the youth that the Shawanoes, instead of camping in the open woods, had halted and kindled their fire in a natural clearing of considerable size. Some of them were likely to be moving about in the immediate vicinity, and the incident of a brief while before proved they were liable to wander some distance from headquarters.

Thus it was that he approached the opening foot by foot, and, as he drew nearer, almost inch by inch, continually pausing, glancing furtively in every direction, listening, and at-

tentively examining his weapon, to make sure it was ready at an instant's call.

At last he gained a position from which he secured a view of the Shawanoe camp. Casting one sweeping look over the strange scene before him, he exclaimed, under his breath :

“I knowed it!”

The sight which held him transfixed was the figure of Simon Kenton bound to a tree, a helpless prisoner among the fierce red men who were making ready to take ample vengeance upon him for the many blows he had struck them in the past.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A DISTINGUISHED PRISONER.

THE remark has been made that it is the unexpected that always happens. In the course of Simon Kenton's long and adventurous career he was compelled to run the gauntlet eight times, and was bound three times to the stake, with no prospect of rescue from one of the most fearful of deaths. In recalling the events of his life, when he was close upon fourscore, he declared that one of the most singular of them all was his capture by Red Bird's band of Shawanoes at the time the ranger set out to help young George Ashbridge recover Agnes Altman, his betrothed.

The reader will not forget that one object Kenton had in view was to free himself of the company of the youth without awaking his suspicion as to the real cause. The circumstances were so peculiar that he feared to have

Ashbridge with him while pursuing the Wyandot lover, who was seeking to transplant the Flower of the Woods to his own tepee or wigwam.

Kenton impressed upon his young friend the possibility that he might not be able to rejoin him after reconnoitering the Shawanoe camp; and, leaving him with that impression, secretly decided that he would not return to him. He did not do so, one important reason being that he was deprived of the power.

Had Kenton followed the simple plan of hunting for the trail of the Antelope and Between-the-Rocks, and pressing their pursuit with the unflinching vigor of which he was capable, all probably would have gone well, and he would have been saved the frightful doom that for a time impended over him.

When, in the darkness of night, he gained a position from which he had a full view of the Shawanoe camp, he spent a long time in watching it. He could do nothing in the way of following the trail of the Wyandots until he had the daylight to assist him, and there was a fascination in looking upon the picture

before him which he had felt many times in his experience.

By actual count there were eighteen warriors, including Red Bird, the chieftain. The clearing was less than a half-acre in extent, almost level, covered with a luxuriant growth of rich, succulent grass, and with three or four stunted trees scattered about. Around the base of the one nearest the middle of the opening a large fire had been started, and was kept burning so brightly that every figure was in as plain view as if the sun were shining. Indeed, the eye could detect a moving object in any portion of the opening.

Three of the warriors were occupied in cooking some game that had been brought in by others before Kenton approached the spot. This was done by holding the pieces of meat on the ends of long sticks over the flames. Now and then the fire burned off the supports, letting the food drop. On such occasions the cook showed a dexterity in pitchforking the meat out of the coals by means of the fragment of wood left in his hand. The fact that the food was pretty well covered with

ashes, mixed with dirt was a matter of no account to those who dined, and who ate their meats so rare that it is only flattery to say it was cooked at all.

Red Bird, the chieftain, was lolling on the ground some distance from the fire and smoking his pipe. Near him were five others, similarly engaged. Now and then they exchanged a word, but whatever the theme, it seemed to possess no special interest to them.

The rest of the Shawanoes varied their actions. Sometimes they sat down and smoked, then a number would stretch at full length, or wander off into the surrounding woods. The last habit should have served as a warning to Kenton, for if any of the warriors happened to head toward him, he would have been placed in a critical situation.

But the ranger was thinking over the rather curious question whether these Shawanoes formed a part or all of the band that had pressed his friends so sorely. It was not so very long since they attempted to burn out the fugitives, and the presence of so many by the fire in the clearing indicated that in some

way they had learned of the escape of Ashbridge and Agnes.

None of the bodies of those that had fallen by the rifles of the three were in sight. It was the custom of the members of all the tribes to carry home those that had fallen in battle, so as to give them suitable burial. It would seem, therefore, that this dismal duty had been assigned to another party, and that Red Bird and his able warriors were lingering in the neighborhood for some distinct purpose.

Kenton knew, from what he had learned very recently, that a formidable and crushing campaign against the combined Indian tribes of the West was in contemplation by President Washington. In all probability "Mad Anthony" Wayne would soon appear on the frontier with a force that would scatter any confederation of red men, and bring the longed-for peace to the settlements.

Such being the probabilities, the Indians themselves must be aware of what was in contemplation. Red Bird, the chieftain, probably knew as much as any one; and, some-

how or other, Kenton suspected he was in the neighborhood for the purpose of meeting his superior, the Panther.

“Him and me hain’t run afoul of each other since that qu’ar rumpus we had last summer, long the Ohio. It looked like a powerful foolish thing when I let him go; but it’s powerfuller qu’ar that I never have felt sorry for it since, though the Panther is just as ugly agin the settlements as ever, and when him and me meets it will be a fight to the end. I won’t spare him agin, and it won’t be Injin natur’ for him to let up on me if he ever gits me down.”

Small parties of Shawanoes, generally in two, and threes, kept coming and going, and Kenton decided, after studying over the matter, that there was a second party, not far away, with whom Red Bird was holding communication.

Thus the night gradually wore away until morning was not far off. The ranger, noting the lapse of time, was meditating leaving the spot, when he saw a warrior emerging from the wood, on the other side of the clearing, and

approach Red Bird. Despite the effort the messenger made to restrain his excitement, Kenton noticed that he was much agitated. He leaned over and uttered a few words to the chief, who, stoical as he generally was, started, rose to the sitting position and said something in a quick undertone.

Then the warrior who had brought the disturbing message walked away in the woods, entering at the same point where he had appeared a few minutes before. In a short while, too, others did the same.

Strange that Kenton, who noted these things, never suspected the possibility of their having reference to him.

After the three had departed, a strange hush seemed to fall upon the Shawanoes grouped around the camp fire. Those who engaged in boiling their food had finished their work long before. Such as chose had eaten, and the cooks lolled on the ground with the rest.

All at once, it seemed to Kenton that a tree had fallen upon him. A crushing blow descended upon his head with such vicious force

that he sank to the ground stunned, bewildered, and for a brief while senseless. He rallied, however, with astonishing quickness, only to find he had reaped the reward of his own foolhardiness.

One of the warriors had detected his presence, and appearing at the opposite side of the clearing, gave the startling news to Red Bird. He directed three of his best men to effect the capture of the interloper. They stole upon the ranger from behind with a stillness that prevented his discovering their approach. Since the capture, not the death, of the pioneer was ordered, one of the Shawanoes felled him with a blow from the handle of his towahawk. The next instant the rifle was snatched from the ranger's nerveless grasp, and the hunting-knife jerked from its resting place over the left breast. Then, with some of the fringes of Kenton's own hunting-shirt, his wrists were bound as securely as if with bands of steel.

By this time his senses began returning, and when his captors attempted to lift him to his feet he was able to give some help. He

was still bewildered and dizzy, and staggered like a drunken man while walking between the warriors toward the chieftain.

Red Bird and all the rest of the Shawanoes bounded to their feet on the appearance of the captive. When they recognized him as the foremost scout of his time, muttered exclamations of delight went up from nearly every one that gathered about the prisoner.

With a tremendous effort of his will Kenton conquered the feeling of faintness and dizziness, and looking straight into the face of the chieftain, whose daubs of paint could not hide his exultation, he said in the Shawanoe tongue :

“ Well, Red Bird, Simon Kenton is your prisoner.”

“ The dog of a pale face whines at the feet of the Shawanoe.”

“ Not a bit of it !” was the sturdy reply ; “ if you call me a fool for letting those knaves of yours get me by the heels, why, I’ll agree with you ; but Simon Kenton don’t beg of any man, white or red, any more than the Panther did when I had him down and let him go.”

The ranger thought it good policy to remind Red Bird of that memorable incident in the life of his superior, though it was hardly to be supposed that the Panther was forward in proclaiming it. The response of Red Bird sounded as though he now heard it for the first time and gave it no credence.

"The dog of a white man speaks with a forked tongue!" he said, angrily. "No pale face ever held the mighty Wa-on-mon at his mercy."

"You can have it your own way, Red Bird, but the next time you see the Panther, ask him of what I've said; then you'll find that it's Red Bird, and not Simon Kenton, that speaks with the double tongue."

"The white man is a dog; he fights squaws and papposes."

"And warriors, too, when he can find 'em."

"The pale faces shall be driven into the deep water; the warriors are gathering like the leaves on the trees; it is the will of the Great Spirit."

It was the same old story that Kenton had heard times without number. When the Pan-

ther himself uttered the boast the preceding summer the ranger reminded him that the repetition was wearisome. And yet, when the preceding events in the history of the frontier are recalled, the hope of the red men was only natural.

“When are you going to begin driving?” asked the pioneer, who felt sufficient hope of escape to seek to sound the chieftain.

“When the warriors can come together. They have dug up the hatchet and have taken the warpath. The Great Father of the pale face dogs will send his army into the woods. He is a fool and thinks he can conquer the red men, but the army shall never go back again; they shall turn pale with fright and and flee as did St. Clair, or shall die the death of Crawford.”

There it was! By some subtle telegraphy that cannot be explained, the warriors in the western wilderness had learned of the expedition of General Wayne weeks before it entered their country.

“Wal,” coolly remarked Kenton, “fighting seems to be the nature of your people ever

since I can remember, and I know your varmints were at it long afore that; but you haven't been able to keep the white people off your hunting-grounds, and you never will. You may drive them back for a time, but they'll come agin till there ain't any of you left."

"The dogs of the pale faces shall come no further!" exclaimed Red Bird with an indescribable fierceness. "The children of the Great Spirit fought against each other and were therefore weak, but now they will fight with each other against the white men and drive them all into the sea."

"I have heerd that boast afore, Shawanoe, and I know its value. I don't begrudge it to you if it does you any good. I've never seed the ginerall that they call 'Mad Anthony Wayne,' but he fit in the Revolution with Ginerall Washington, and helped a big lot in driving the red coats back across the sea. St. Clair done the same, but not like 'Mad Anthony'; and, Red Bird, if you want my 'pinion, it is that when he gits through with you and the rest of the varmints you won't know

whether you're a Shawanoe or the ridge-pole of a wigwam."

The chieftain hardly caught the meaning of the ranger's vigorous language, though he saw that his prisoner was following the same line with himself—that is, boasting to as full an extent as he knew how. No captive ever secures the good-will and indulgence of an American Indian by cringing or begging for it. Kenton not only understood the nature of these people in this respect, but he was too brave a man to ask for mercy, even where there was a prospect of gaining it.

"Is the dog of a white man afraid to die?" asked the chieftain, lowering his voice, and looking in the face of his prisoner with significant fixedness.

"When Red Bird sees the white clasp his hands and bend his knees and cry, then he will know he is afraid. Shawanoe, it has been my fortune to start a number of your young men on the road to their happy hunting-grounds—"

"But the dog of a pale face shall harm no more of the warriors of Red Bird," broke in

the chieftain, with his old savagery of manner.

“I s’pose not, and that’s my grief now. I had hope that I might do a little more of it before my last sickness overtook me. Shawanoe, if you will tell your warrior to hand me back my knife, I will stand here and fight you to the death.”

This proposal caused a sensation among the red men, including their chieftain. They knew Kenton as the bravest and most skilful of all the white men that roamed the woods, and it is not impossible that some of them had heard of his encounter with the Panther, when he held him at his mercy and yet spared him. At any rate, there was none there who dared meet him in mortal fray.

It may be said that the proposition of the captive was without precedent. The chieftain certainly would have been foolish, after securing the formidable foe of the red men, to give him the opportunity to inflict more injury upon them, when in no event could any possible good accrue to Red Bird.

“The snake that crawls in the grass shall

be crushed by the heel of the hunter, and the dog of the white man that slays the pappoose and the squaw is not worthy to die the death of a warrior."

This untruthful slur upon the courage of the prisoner was meant to rouse him to fury. It was a favorite method among the American Indians and often accomplished its purpose, but it failed in the case of Kenton. He was equally pointed in his reply, which was made without any excitement of manner.

"Red Bird speaks lies when he opens his mouth. The Great Spirit made him so, and he cannot help it; and if he met the white alone in the woods he would beg for mercy; but when he has his warriors around him, then he is brave, and can utter lies."

"The chieftain felt that this duel of words, in which he was getting the worst of it, should end. He signaled to a number of his warriors standing around. As if expecting and impatient for the word, they seized the defiant prisoner and hurried to one of the stunted trees standing near the border of the opening. There the unresisting ran-

ger was bound so securely that he could hardly move.

“I’ve been in several scrapes like this afore,” he coolly reflected, “and I reckon I’ve larned that it means the varmints intend to burn Simon Kenton at the stake.”

Beyond a question he was right in his surmise.

CHAPTER XIX.

A MARVELLOUS EXPLOIT.

THE American race is proverbial for its delight in the torture of its prisoners. Like other savage peoples (not omitting civilized ones), it has carried this art to a refinement that seems to leave nothing possible of attainment in that direction.

The Shawanoe who stole up behind the unsuspecting Simon Kenton could have killed him with the same ease that one of their number struck him senseless to the earth. Red Bird, with equal facility and in perfect safety, could have slain him as he stood; but either one of these finalities would have robbed the red men of the pleasure of seeing a brave man suffer.

Had the scene been one of the Indian towns, doubtless Kenton would have been compelled to run the gantlet. He had gone

through that particular torment so often that it may be said he had become used to it. The Shawanoes in this instance, therefore, would have been sure that he was knocked to the earth and beaten to death before reaching the end of the run. This was always very entertaining to the squaws and children.

But none of these was present, and death by burning at the stake naturally suggested itself. Accordingly, Kenton was preparing for the terrifying ordeal, such preparation being of the simplest nature conceivable.

His wrists had been secured together from the first in front of his body. He was now placed before one of the trees already referred to and fastened thereto. This was done by means of a powerful cord passed around his thighs and then around the trunk of the tree, where it was tied with the strongest of knots. The cord itself was so tenacious that three men, each with the strength of Kenton himself, unitedly could not have snapped it apart. It was constructed mainly from the fringes or thongs furnished by the prisoner's own garments.

The thought must not obtain that the ranger showed meekness inconsistent with his character in his submission to his captors. Had he received the slightest warning of their stealthy approach they would have found a difficult job on their hands. Simon Kenton, when fighting for his life, was a raging cat o' mountain. When a young man, in an affray with a rival in love, he struck him a single blow, which, it was believed, had killed him. It was to escape punishment for the man's death that Kenton fled, under an assumed name, to the Western wilderness, to learn, many years later, that his antagonist had recovered from the hurt.

It has been shown that Kenton did not fully regain consciousness until his hands were bound and he was so surrounded by his vigilant enemies that escape was impossible. He affected to be resigned to his fate, but none the less he was on the alert to take advantage of the first hope, no matter how faint, that presented itself.

But it seemed as if none was to appear. The fame that he had earned by his many

exploits led the Shawanoes to keep the closest watch over his actions and to anticipate his slightest movement. Every glance of his eye was noted, and no temptation presented for a sudden, spirited dash for freedom.

Kenton's policy from the first was to affect a resignation, in the hope of throwing his enemies for a minute or so off their guard, but he did not succeed. There were a few seconds, when they were conducting him to the fatal tree, that he was on the point of making the attempt to break away, but he restrained himself, vainly hoping the opportunity would come by and by.

Day was fully arrived when he was tied to the stake, but it was not a part of the cruel Red Bird's plan that the torture should begin at once. Like all his people, he wished to extend the pleasure of witnessing his victim's mental anguish before his physical sufferings began.

A number of the warriors now scattered in different directions in the wood to gather fuel. They soon reappeared, one at a time, and flung the green and dry branches and leaves at the

feet of the captive. This was continued until enough was collected to furnish more than could possibly be required.

While this trying ordeal was under way Kenton managed repeatedly to test the strength of the cord without the act being observed by his captors. Leaning slightly forward in a natural posture, he brought to bear all his tremendous power, exerting himself to the utmost to break the slight rope. If he could succeed in doing so he meant to dash off among the trees, more than willing to run the risk of being shot down by his pursuers rather than suffer the torment that awaited him if he failed in escaping.

All in vain. It seemed as if the thongs could not have been stronger had they been composed of woven bands of steel.

Men of the rugged nature of Simon Kenton do not despair until the last moment. It is hard to understand what justification he had for hope from the time he was tied to the stake, and yet it cannot be said that it wholly deserted him for hours. It may be that his extraordinary experiences were one cause for

his confidence that in some way or other the final deliverance would come.

Red Bird signified to his warriors that sufficient fuel had been gathered and placed around the prisoner, and they fell back and impatiently awaited the word for the opening of the entertainment. But not yet. This noted captive must be given time in which to anticipate what was coming.

The old wrangle and abuse were renewed between him and the chieftain. Each sought to exasperate the other, and the prisoner made more of a success of it than did his master. It is not worth giving the words that passed between them, more than to say that it was of the general character already known to the reader.

This recrimination continued until the hostiles gathered around must have grown weary, though it did not show in their stolid faces. Even Red Bird seemed to reach the decision that there had been enough.

Simon Kenton thought that possibly the torture might be deferred until there was time for the arrival of help from the block-house.

He had directed Ashbridge to hurry thither with the coming of daylight; but though he should make all haste in going, and his friends equal haste in returning, a good many hours must pass before they could possibly show up, that is, if they did not start until word was received from him. His expectation, rather, was that the delay in the return of Ashbridge and Agnes to the fort would bring out a rescue party with the earliest dawn, and that some of the scouts might come upon the Shawanoe party in time to create a diversion in his favor. The forenoon, however, was well along, and not the first sign had appeared in the surrounding solitude.

The repeated efforts to break the thongs that bound him met with not the slightest encouragement. Finally, when Red Bird gave the signal to apply the flames to the fagots piled around Kenton, the latter resigned himself to his fate with the courage of a truly brave man.

It was a brief while before that Jethro Juggens, stealing through the woods, was horrified at discovering the ranger in this plight.

Carefully keeping himself from view, he looked upon the scene with emotions for which he could find no utterance. He noted the calm, grim face of Kenton, who was standing with his hands tied in front, and a cord passed around his hips and secured to the tree behind him. His shoulders were bent forward, as though he was still bringing what pressure he could to bear upon the cord, and he looked without flinching into the faces of the chieftain and his warriors grouped about him.

“Heben sabe me!” gasped Jethro, “de heathen am gwine to burn Marse Kenton to def! Can’t I do nuffin to help de poor feller?”

The grieving youth reflected for a moment and then added:

“Ill stand hyah, and de fust one ob dem dat stoops down to light dem sticks dey hab piled around him, why, I’ll plug him frough so quick he won’t know what killed him.”

This could not fail to be effective so far as the first hostile was concerned, but it did not take Jethro long to see that the only possible

result would be to postpone the torture for a few minutes, and incidentally to bring about his own destruction.

It has come to pass more than once that a brave man, looking upon a friend in such fearful extremity, has mercifully ended his suffering by sending a bullet through his brain. Colonel Crawford, when undergoing torture at the stake, besought Simon Girty to terminate his agony by that means, but the prayer was unheeded.

The thought never came to Jethro Juggens, as he stood awed, terrified and sympathizing, peering from the wood at his hapless friend. Had it occurred to him, he never could have brought himself to the deed; and, furthermore, had he done so, he would have been compelled unquestionably to take the place of the condemned captive.

But through that dull brain flashed an idea like an inspiration.

With the same guarded stealth that he had shown from the first, the dusky youth withdrew from his point of observation, and circled part way round the natural clearing. One

oak had served him so well that he had selected another. Under the spur of excitement, the like of which he had never known, he swung himself among the lower limbs with one hand, holding his indispensable rifle in the other. Then he continued to climb until he had ascended more than half-way to the top. He next worked his way out on a strong limb, which bore his weight without perceptibly yielding.

He was on the side next to the clearing, and when, with one hand, he parted the leaves in front and peered out, he found, as he anticipated, that he had a full view of the scene, whose first sight almost checked the throbbing of his heart.

Red Bird was standing directly in front of Kenton and exchanging what the chieftain doubtless believed were their last words. The sun was shining brightly and not a breath of air rustled the leaves. Jethro carefully studied every point of what was before him, and reverently murmured:

“O good Lord, if yo’ want to help Jeth Juggens and Marse Kenton, yo’ll neber hab a

better chance dan dis! Mor'n likely it'll be de last ob Jeth, but Marse Kenton am a good friend of mine and I'll take de chance."

He seated himself astride of the limb, along which he had inched his way, and rested his heavy rifle on the one above it, pointing the muzzle toward the clearing. A small branch interfered with his sight, and he broke it off, the snapping of the twig giving him a start, but the distance was too great for so slight a sound to reach the ears of the Shawanoes.

The cumbersome hammer of the old flint-lock was drawn far back and Jethro deliberately sighted along the barrel. His weapon contained the little v-shaped notch near the muzzle, and a sight, corresponding somewhat, in front of the hammer. The skill of the youth with his gun, as the reader knows, was his most astonishing peculiarity. With full confidence in that skill, he resolved, nevertheless, that this should be the shot of his life, for never were the stakes so momentous as now.

He had determined, with the help of heaven, that the bond which held Simon Kenton a

prisoner at the stake should be cut in twain by a bullet from his rifle.

From his perch in the tree he could see the knot tied securely against the trunk opposite to Kenton. His first intention was to strike this knot, but he decided that the shot was less likely to be effective than if he hit the single strand. Where the cord was gathered the resistance would be greater, and he was likely to strike a portion which, if severed, would leave the strength as it was at first.

This thong, as has been stated, was of small diameter, though its tenacity was great. A bullet driven directly against it must either cut it in two or leave it so weakened that a slight strain would snap it. This was the task which Jethro Juggens laid out for himself.

Kenton's side was toward him. Thus the African saw the cord for a part of its length as it wound around the trunk like a climbing vine or serpent. To accomplish his work he must strike the thong fairly and squarely. A hair's variation either too high or too low would result in failure. Jethro believed he could perform the feat.

He saw there was not another minute to wait. Red Bird had finished all he wished to say to his prisoner, who had not been backward in expressing his views. The chief now stepped back and made a gesture to his warriors, who were watching him. One of them came quickly to the camp fire, which had been allowed to smoulder, picked up a half-consumed brand, and fanned it into a blaze by quickly circling it about his head several times. Then he walked to the tree, stooped again, and applied the torch to the fagots at the feet of the prisoner.

A tiny tongue of flame began climbing upward like a crimson serpent among the fagots. The Indian, still stooping, bent his head and blew upon the little blaze, to fan it into quicker life. He was thus engaged when from somewhere in the surrounding woods sounded the sharp, whip-like crack of a rifle. Then came the transformation scene.

Jethro Juggens held the barrel of his gun motionless on the limb in front of him, and continued peering along its shining length until he saw the result of his shot.

“Tank de Lord!” was his fervent exclamation; “I hab done it!”

And then, after a few minutes’ more silent scrutiny, he gave his whole attention to his own safety.

“I dunno wheder dem heathens obsarved dat de sound ob my gun come from among de tree tops instead ob de ground, but ef dey did, Jeth Juggens mought better be somewhere else dan where he am.”

With all the care possible he reloaded his weapon, and waited and listened. Fortunately for him, he was so far above the ground that a person passing beneath could not see him by glancing upward. Still, if the Shawanoes had noticed the point whence sounded the report, they would be certain to locate it closely enough to bring the African to light. But as minute after minute passed without any such discovery the hopes of Jethro increased, until the time came when he thought it safe to descend the tree and take the next important step in the decisive events of this day.

CHAPTER XX.

A SURRENDER.

WHEN the Dark Angel shakes his spear at us, how worse than trifling seem the affairs of this life! What regrets, what sorrow, what remorse take possession of the soul when we stand on the shore of the shadowy river and meet the boatman waiting to ferry us to the other side!

At the moment when all hope had fled from the heart of Simon Kenton, and he nerved himself to meet the last great trial that could come to him, Jethro Juggens' rifle split the solemn silence. He felt the faintest possible tremor in the thong which passed around the tree and his body. A quick, powerful inclination forward and it snapped in two. He was free!

One tremendous bound carried him over the head of the kneeling Shawanoe, who was

still fanning the tiny flame with his breath. Red Bird was directly in his path. Raising high the hands that were fastened at the wrists, the ranger brought them down with a vicious force in the face of the chieftain that tumbled him senseless on his back, at the same instant that the escaping prisoner made a second leap, this time over him, and, wheeling to the left, dashed at the highest bent of his speed for the woods.

Kenton made this abrupt turn in his course because it presented the shortest distance to the only refuge within reach. Providentially, it was almost opposite to the direction that would have taken him beneath the tree from which had been sent the shot that awoke hope and inspired him to the final effort to save himself.

The chance of this startling series of incidents lay in their hurricane-like suddenness. The bound and flight of Kenton seemed simultaneous with the report of Jethro's weapon. It was so quick, so unexpected, that, accustomed as the Shawanoes were to surprises, several seconds passed before they compre-

hended what had taken place. Therein lay the whole prospect of the ranger's escape. Had he delayed for that brief time to take advantage of the opportunity, it would have been too late.

The first hostile to regain his senses was the one engaged in kindling the fagots around the tree. He had laid aside his gun before doing this, but, straightening up on the instant, he darted to where it lay, brought it to a level, and fired at the fleeing white man. It was done so quickly that the warrior had no time to secure aim, and the bullet cut the leaves at the shoulder of the tall fugitive at the moment he vanished from sight among the trees. Then two other Shawanoes fired, but their aim was only a general one, being directed at the point where the daring white man had disappeared. The balls sped so wide of their mark that Kenton was not in any danger from them.

A warrior knelt beside the fallen chieftain and gave him what attention he could. He perceived that he had been "hit hard" by the fists of the ranger, but would speedily rally without any help from others.

Among the war party were five who did the most sensible, and, indeed, the only thing that under the circumstances could be done—they started in pursuit of the flying fugitive.

With the burst of hope, all of Simon Kenton's matchless woodcraft and fertility of resources flashed into his brain. He did not know the point whence the friendly shot had come and took the course he did for the reason already named; but, well aware that a swift and persistent pursuit would follow, he made another sharp turn in his line of flight the instant he was among the trees, and, as he believed, beyond sight of his enemies.

This strategy must have been successful but for a condition which he could not foresee. He was no more than fairly under way when the wood became so open and free from undergrowth that his tall form was visible to the foremost and fleetest of his pursuers. He emitted a shout which apprised the others of his discovery, and they streamed after him with the resolution to keep up the pursuit until the fugitive was run down.

It will be noted that Kenton was laboring

under a woeful handicap, for he was without rifle or knife. He might well shrink from meeting the most insignificant warrior, so long as he himself possessed no other means of defending himself than that which nature had furnished him. His sole hope lay in his speed, though he wondered once or twice whether the brother ranger (as he imagined his friend to be) would not manage in some way to cross his line of flight and give him further aid.

It was idle, however, to count upon anything of the kind. Fleetness of foot was the one and only thing that could carry him to safety, and he had never yet been outrun by any member of the American race. In a fair contest he would not shrink from nor fear the issue. All that he now asked was to draw away so far as to be beyond reach of the rifles carried by his pursuers.

An unpleasant truth speedily became apparent to the fugitive: the foremost of his pursuers was fully his equal in fleetness. While he gradually left his comrades behind, Kenton could not serve him the same way.

The Shawanoe must have cherished a belief of overtaking his man, for he refrained from shooting when several inviting opportunities presented.

It was Kenton's wish to draw this shot, for, counting upon a miss, he meant to wheel and assail the warrior with sudden fury, before he could reload. He would take chances against the knife for the sake of securing the weapon, powder-horn, and bullet-pouch. Armed with these, the fugitive would consider his safety as good as secured.

The wood continued open for a considerable distance, when the undergrowth began to reappear. The white man was running northward, though he had no special purpose in this except to throw the persistent buck off his track. Looking back, he could see the miscreant holding his own with a persistency that would not be denied or baffled, but the four that had started with him were nowhere in sight.

Kenton bent his head in the hope that he could elude the sight of the Shawanoe for the space of a few moments, and, thinking he had

done so, he made another abrupt turn in his line of flight.

"It ain't often that Simon Kenton has run for his life from one of the varmints," he grimly muttered, "but there don't seem to be any help for it this time. I wonder what's become of the rest of 'em, and what's become of this one, too?"

For a while he believed he had outwitted him, but the sight of the figure flitting among the trees brought an impatient exclamation from the fugitive and a fierce burst of speed that caused a perceptible gain, though it could not be continued long enough to be effective.

Kenton chafed under the restraint of his bound wrists. It would be easy enough to free them if he dare take a minute or two to do so, but the seconds were too immeasurably precious to permit the briefest halt.

Suddenly the report of a rifle rang among the trees. The Shawanoe, fearful that his man was about to escape him, halted, leveled his gun, and fired. The weapon was so well-aimed that the bullet grazed the cheek of the flying white man.

"That's what I've been waiting for!" he exclaimed, wheeling about and making for his enemy with the fury of a tiger.

He had taken but a few steps when he abruptly halted, with another angry exclamation. The Shawanoe had vanished. It was as if he had dropped into the crater of a volcano.

The mystified fugitive raised his hands and savagely sawed the thongs against the jagged bark of a tree. The abrasion so weakened them that with a slight effort he snapped them apart.

He was too wise not to be suspicious of the vanishment of his pursuer. More than likely he had darted into cover somewhere, and he would remain quiescent only until he could reload his gun. Then he would resume the pursuit, or, if he fired again, his aim would be more effective.

They had entered a rocky section, similar in some respects to that in which George Ashbridge and Agnes Altman were involved the preceding day, though it was further north of the Ohio. Crouching low, in the hope of

hiding himself, Kenton continued his flight with the same speed as before, and with more comfort since the freeing of his wrists.

To his chagrin the Shawanoe popped up on his right, and so near that the fugitive turned in the opposite direction to save himself from running into his embrace.

"I don't know whether I want him to fire again or not, for his aim is a powerful sight too good."

What Kenton feared was that his enemy would seek to wound him whenever he felt doubt about running him down. With a bullet in his foot, or knee, or thigh, the white man would be as much at the mercy of his foe as when bound to the tree in the clearing, with the wood piled about his feet.

"He's one of the few varmints I can't out-run—helloa!"

He had come upon a chasm similar to that which confronted Ashbridge and Agnes in their flight. It was wide, but he showed no more hesitation than did the youth. Concentrating his mighty muscles, the ranger rose in air and landed on the opposite ledge.

"It'll be just like him to do the same thing," he muttered, running a short distance and then glancing back. He meditated pausing on the brink, and, confronting his enemy as he alighted, hurl him back into the chasm, but he knew the redskin would not run any such risk. He was more likely to shoot and wound the fugitive.

Sure enough, the Shawanoe made no more pause than did Kenton himself, but, rising gracefully in air, cleared the chasm with the same ease as he. By this time the latter was speeding away again, as when he started upon his desperate race for life.

"He beats any varmint I ever run agin," reflected Kenton, "and it would be a pity to drop him in his tracks, but I only wish I had the chance."

The nature of the ground favored the fugitive for a time, being rough, uneven, interspersed with gullies, slight ravines, undergrowth, and rocks. He was repeatedly tempted to turn aside in the effort to find some concealment, but he had good cause to fear the consequences. Of necessity, his pursuer would

halt upon missing him and begin a search. Knowing the spot where he had last seen the white man, he would readily detect his trail and bring him to light. So long as the Indian carried a loaded gun he had him at his mercy.

There was still more to be feared. It was not certain that the other four had withdrawn from the race. If not, they were running so well that it would not take long for them to arrive on the scene. By joining with the leader in the hunt, all earthly chance of Kenton getting away would be at an end.

As it seemed to the latter, there were only two remote chances of eluding his relentless enemies : the first was by meeting some brother ranger or running into a friendly camp (a prospect of which there was scarcely one in a thousand), and the other was by reaching a stream of water, into which he could plunge and effectually hide his trail.

Kenton was sufficiently acquainted with the country to know that a stream such as he had in mind coursed across the wood to the north-

ward, but he feared it was a long way off. As it offered his only hope, he bent his energies toward reaching it. His plan was to keep running at a pace somewhat less than the one of which he was capable, until the signs showed he was in its vicinity, when he would put forth another burst of speed, which he trusted would so increase the space between him and his pursuer that he would gain a chance by a long dive, a desperate swim, and a determined effort to throw off the redskin that had clung to him with most extraordinary tenacity.

He was in reality nearer the stream he had in mind than he suspected. He recognized an increasing opening in the spaces between the trees as the sign for which he yearned, and he instantly struck a gait which must have astonished his pursuer. Glancing over his shoulder, Kenton saw he was gaining faster than at any time previous in the remarkable and long-continued struggle.

"It's do or die, this time!" he said, grimly compressing his lips and summoning his utmost strength for the terrific effort. "If I

don't get away from him I'll hide and have it out with him."

The bank of the stream where he reached it was rocky and several feet above the surface of the water. Kenton did not know its depth, and there was no means of learning. He must take the chances. With no abatement, but rather an increase, if possible, of his amazing speed, he made a prodigious plunge far out into the water, which was of comparatively narrow width, and disappeared.

He touched bottom lightly, and, as nearly as he could judge, the depth was less than a dozen feet. Knowing his enemy would arrive on the bank behind him in a few moments, he swam under the surface in the direction of the current, with all the strength and skill he possessed, and for the longest possible period that he could hold his breath. Then, instead of allowing his head to rise, or seeking to look behind him to learn what his enemy was doing, he caught one deep respiration and sank again and continued his furious swimming. He was still at it when the decreasing depth warned him that he was close to the other shore.

In the sweeping survey he took at the moment of leaping into the stream the ranger noted that the opposite bank was fringed in several places with overhanging bushes. He aimed to secure the shelter of these, for, if he could succeed in doing so, he was likely to deceive his pursuer.

Fortune favored him. He rose precisely where he desired and, under the impenetrable protection, parted the bushes behind him and peered at the other side.

To his astonishment, he saw nothing of the Shawanoe, though his vision ranged up and down the bank for a considerable distance.

"I don't know what's become of the varmint," he muttered, "but I ain't going to hunt him up."

Drawing himself carefully from the water, Kenton stole forward until certain he was beyond sight of any one behind him. Then he straightened up and advanced with more confidence than at any moment since beginning the race. He had walked less than twenty steps, when, to his amazement, he came face to face with a fully-armed and painted

Shawanoë, whose attitude showed he was expecting and waiting for the fugitive.

Kenton gave him one searching look and then said in the Indian tongue: "I surrender!"

CHAPTER XXI.

GOOD-BYE TO THE PANTHER.

NO living Shawanoe dare question the will of the terrible Wa-on-Mon. A brother chieftain once dared to beard him at a council fire, and his fate was that of the Wanpanoag warrior who advised King Philip, of Mount Hope, to cease fighting the early New Englanders; he was brained on the spot.

When, therefore, the Panther called the Wyandot Adonis, known as the Antelope, a squaw for seeking to take Agnes Altman (otherwise known as the Flower of the Woods) to his home as his wife, the frightened youth had not the temerity to attempt a reply. He was thankful that his life was spared, and, when ordered to go, stood not on the order of his going, but went.

The missionary, Finley sitting apart with the young woman, instantly "caught on" to

the situation when he saw the frightened youth turn abruptly about and walk toward his canoe. So did Mocha-wen-quah, or Between-the-Rocks, who was on the alert. The Antelope did not look to the right or left. He seemed unaware of the presence of his brother warrior and of the two whites sitting within his range of vision. All that he desired was to reach his craft and to get out of the presence of Wa-on-mon with the least delay possible. The two entered the boat, and, shoving out into the stream, paddled off with all speed.

Finley could not avoid a broad smile.

"I think you can read the meaning of that," he remarked to Agnes.

"If I am not mistaken, the Panther has refused the prayer of the Antelope," said the happy Agnes.

"You are right; he is glad enough to get off with his life; you will have no more trouble in that direction."

"He may visit the block-house again to see me."

"Not while the Panther lives; he holds him in too much dread."

“I must thank Wa-on-mon for his goodness to me.”

“Better not; he is in one of his most dangerous moods.”

But the young woman was so overjoyed because of the load that had been lifted from her heart that she paid no heed to the warning of the missionary. The Panther had faced about, and stood, his rifle in one hand, with the stock resting on the ground, looking at the Wyandots, who, under the propulsion of the paddle swayed by Between-the-Rocks, were skimming like a swallow in their course down stream. The great war chieftain's ugly face was rendered more repellant by the wrathful scowl that darkened it. His gleaming black eyes were fixed upon the two warriors as though they were the only objects in his field of vision.

Missionary Finley knew the dark thoughts that were seething in the brain of Wa-on-mon. He was meditating whether he should raise his rifle and shoot dead the handsome Wyandot that had shown himself a squaw because he had plead for permission to take

the Flower of the Woods to his wigwam. The good man expected the chieftain to bring his gun to a level and end the career, with lightning-like suddenness, of the effeminate Antelope. Not until the canoe with its occupants vanished around the bend in the stream, did Finley breathe freely.

The Panther held his threatening pose, when the joyous Agnes ran to him and laid her hand on his arm.

“O Wa-on-mon, I thank you for your kindness; I shall never forget you.”

She looked up in the forbidding countenance, as she would have gazed into that of the missionary, loving, hope and trusting as a child in the arms of its parent. Only for an instant did the Panther seem to know of her presence. He flashed one glance at her, and then resumed his glowering stare in the direction of the vanished canoe. Not a muscle stirred.

Missionary Finley stealthily raised the hammer of his rifle, holding the weapon so that it could be raised and fired in the twinkling of an eye. His gaze was on the red

man's face and was not once removed so long as Agnes Altman stood within reach of the terrible chieftain. He had said that the Panther was in one of his most dangerous moods. At such times he was the creature of startling whims. It would have been like him to expend the wrath he restrained a few minutes before, in one terrific outburst upon the innocent, unsuspecting Agnes. This was what the missionary feared, and he held himself ready to meet it with an instant bullet through the brain of the Shawanoe.

But Agnes was quick to note the temper of the chieftain, and, without another word, and, without waiting for any response from him, she turned and hurried back to Mr. Finley, her manner betraying nothing of the awful fear that had come into her heart.

With the disappearance of the Wyandots the Panther soon roused himself from the murderous temper in which he had been sunk. Striding to his canoe, which rested against the bank, he placed one hand on the prow, and then looked toward the missionary and young woman.

“He wishes us to join him,” remarked the former, rising to his feet; “follow the advice I gave you, my child, and do not speak to him unless he asks you a question.”

Agnes had become thoroughly impressed with the savage mood of the Shawanoe, and would have been immeasurably relieved could they have parted company then and there. She kept a couple of paces behind her protector, as they approached the boat, pausing at its side for direction as to where she should seat herself.

The Panther motioned for her to take her place near the middle, while Finley was to sit at the stern, the intention of the Shawanoe being to seat himself nearer the prow, which he would face while swaying the paddle.

The missionary grasped the arm of Agnes above the elbow, to help her in the canoe. As he did so, he pinched it significantly. She looked up in his face, and saw an expression she had never seen there before. The ruddy countenance was slightly paled, the lips were compressed, and a fierce light shone in the

eyes that to her had always been mild, and gentle, and loving.

She was about to do as the Panther indicated, but Finley, retaining his grasp on her arm, pushed her slightly away from him. At the same time he said, in the lowest, guarded undertone :

“ Sit in the stern ! ”

The face of the missionary was as threatening in its way as that of the chieftain, and, frightened as never before, she obeyed without a word. Then a strange thing took place.

Agnes was seated, as described, at the stern, and taking up her small weapon, which she had carried thither, looked inquiringly at her companion. The right hand of the Panther rested on the curving bow of the canoe, while his left grasped his rifle. The pose compelled him to lean slightly forward, so that his appearance suggested that of a wild beast gathering itself to leap upon its prey. He was staring intently at the white man who had dared to dispute his commands, for low as was the voice which directed Agnes to sit in the stern, it was heard by the chieftain.

The missionary never stood more erect. His massive shoulders were thrown back, one foot slightly advanced; and his rifle, firmly held by both hands diagonally across his chest, was a weapon as ready for instant service as the hunting-knife in the girdle of the Shawanoe. His gray eyes met the black ones of the chieftain with a glance equally as defiant. They understood each other.

The pose, the looks, the manner, said as plainly as words:

“Shawanoe, I read your heart! You meditate slaying Agnes Altman. On the first motion to do so I shall kill you! Others may be afraid of you, but I am not, and you know it, Wa-on-mon!”

The good man had trusted his life many times to the keeping of the fearful leader of the Shawanoes. It was not often that the hand of the Panther was stayed when a pale face was at his mercy, but he had never yet harmed a hair of the missionary's head, even though they had met more than once when the chieftain was on the war-path.

It may have been that it was because the

man of God fully trusted him ; that he was unquestionably a brave person ; that he always spoke with a single tongue ; that his life was in accord with his preaching ; that his heart overflowed with kindness, and love, and charity ; or, more truly, that it was a combination of all these attributes which made it safe for the missionary to walk where no other white man dared to tread.

But under the lamb-like exterior slumbered a lion that on suitable occasion was roused into life. Reading the half-formed purpose of the Panther stirred the wrath of Finley to white heat. The Shawanoe knew it, and cowered before the storm that impended over his head.

Not a word was uttered by either, and the striking tableau lasted but a moment. The missionary calmly seated himself in the canoe and the Panther shoved it clear of the land, stepping lightly into the craft as it was moving off, and taking up the paddle which none could handle more deftly than he. In accordance with custom, he placed himself so as to face the prow, dipping the oar first on one side and then on the other.

Agnes did not notice that her friend assumed a position which left him free to use his rifle with instant suddenness. He laid the weapon across his lap, the muzzle projecting beyond and resting upon the gunwale on his left. With apparent carelessness his right hand reposed on the lock, so that, without shifting its position, he could raise the hammer with his thumb. He was not yet prepared fully to trust the Panther.

Instinctively, rather than as the result of thought, Agnes held her own weapon as if she expected to need its use in some emergency she neither foresaw nor understood.

The Panther guided the canoe into the middle of the stream and propelled it with deliberation. He showed no haste or impatience, though he was engaged upon the most important business of his life. The shores were densely wooded, and gradually approached each other as the deeply-laden craft moved against the current.

Now that the dread which oppressed her so long had passed, a natural curiosity impelled the young woman to ask :

“Where are we going, Mr. Finley?”

He replied, in his usual manner:

“When the Panther and I came upon you I was on my way to the block-house.”

“Did he mean to accompany you?” she asked in surprise.

“No; he has never been there, and I do not think he will ever go.”

“How, then, did you intend to manage it?”

“Wa-on-mon and I have journeyed many miles in the wilderness together,” replied the missionary, meaning his words as much for the silent figure in front as for the vivacious one behind him; “we have never quarreled, and never will. When I reached the mouth of this stream and told him whither I was going, he kindly offered to take me a portion of the way. He was engaged in doing so when, providentially, we encountered you and the two Wyandots, the Antelope and Between-the-Rocks.”

“But you just said you would not go the whole distance together.”

“This stream makes a sweeping bend to the north at no great distance from here.

That point is the nearest to the block-house that we can reach in this boat except by descending to the Ohio, and when we arrive at the spot I have in mind we shall part company with the Panther. He will go whither he chooses with his canoe and we will make the rest of our journey on foot."

"How far shall we have to walk?"

"Not more than five or six miles. I hope that nothing will occur to prevent our safe arrival, though there is much unrest among the Indians, and many of them are roaming through the woods."

"I feel no fear so long as Wa-on-mon is with us," said Agnes, taking her turn in uttering a sentiment for the benefit of their companion, whose coppery body did not sway a hair's breadth to the right or left as he manipulated the paddle with the smooth regularity of a piece of perfect machinery. He was naked above the waist, his shoulders being half-hidden by the mass of coarse black hair which fell about them.

There is little muscular development in the American Indian, only a slight ridging show-

ing at the shoulder-blades of the Shawanoe, while the long arms had a lankness that gave no indication of the marvellous force and quickness of action of which they were capable. He continued to gaze straight ahead, with an occasional glance at the shore to the right or left, but not once was the head sufficiently turned to reveal his profile to the two, whose eyes were hardly ever removed from the strange being that attracted them with a fascination for which neither could account.

The missionary was sure that no one read the workings of the Shawanoe's mind as well as himself. He had known him so intimately for years that he could make little mistake on that point. The vengeful, vindictive mood that had grown upon him after the departure of the Wyandots had gradually passed, while he swung the paddle, until nothing further was to be feared for the time from him.

"Yes," replied Mr. Finley to the remark of Agnes, "we have nothing to dread from Shawanoe or Wyandot so long as he is with us, but we part in a few minutes now."

Agnes had noticed the sweeping bend of

the river to the left, only a short distance ahead. While her friend was speaking, the Panther turned the bow of the canoe to the right, and a few powerful sweeps of the paddle sent the craft against the bank. At the moment of touching the white man stepped out, and, turning, gave his hand to the young woman, who sprang lightly beside him.

The Panther, without a word, headed out in the stream again and resumed paddling. Mr. Finley looked after him with a curious expression, but did not speak.

“Good-bye, Wa-on-mon!” called Agnes, waving her hand to the chieftain’s back. As her clear, joyous voice rang across the water, the Shawanoe ceased paddling for a moment, turned his head, and, looking fixedly at the young man, called, in her tongue:

“Good-bye, Flower of the Woods!” Then he turned again and continued paddling until he disappeared around the bend in the stream. Neither Missionary Finley nor Agnes Altman ever saw him again.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE ACCOUNT SQUARED.

SIMON KENTON had made a gallant and determined struggle for life, having led the pursuing Shawanoes on a long and desperate chase, and finally thrown the foremost and only really dangerous one off his track by leaping into the stream and swimming most of the distance under the surface to the other shore.

His relentless enemy arrived on the southern bank while the ranger was swimming with such consummate ease and swiftness out of sight. The first supposition of the pursuer, after a glance at the unruffled surface, must have been that the white man had not plunged into the water, but had darted to the right or left, along the edge of the stream. It required two or three minutes for the Shawanoe to discover his mistake, and to learn that Kenton

was undoubtedly making for the other shore, if he had not already reached it. Inasmuch, however, as the fugitive had taken his last inhalation before reaching the shelter of the overhanging vegetation, the pursuer descried nothing of him.

The shrewd Shawanoe suspected the truth, and drawing back from the shore, so as to be out of sight, watched for the other to appear. Almost any one beside Kenton, on the failure to see even one of his enemies, would have revealed himself by his carelessness of flight, after his assurance of escape. He was too wise to do anything of that nature, and was breathing freely after his exhausting run and swim, certain that all real peril was past, when, to his consternation, he came face to face with another Shawanoe warrior, and almost instantly surrendered to him.

There were the best of reasons for this act, which probably has struck the reader as out of keeping with the character of Simon Kenton. In the first place, the Indian discovered the approach of the fugitive, who did not observe his danger until he was inextricably in

it. Without a gun or knife the ranger could make no fight against the sinewy red man. The principal reason, however, for Kenton surrendering so promptly was that at the first glance he recognized the other as Wa-on-mon, known as the Panther, the terrible war chief of the Shawanoes.

Had the Indian been an ordinary warrior the scout would have tried to leap upon or engage him single-handed, but nothing of the kind could be done with the Panther, and, recognizing his helplessness, Kenton did the wisest thing conceivable by surrendering off-hand to him.

It is more than likely that the chieftain identified the famous hunter and pioneer before the latter saw him, for the advantage was with the red man; but with the opportunity of shooting down his implacable enemy before the latter could know whence the blow came, the Panther assumed an easy and not ungraceful attitude, and coolly awaited the approach of the other, as though he were one of his scouts returning with some information he had been sent to obtain for him.

It is hardly necessary to state that the words that passed between these two remarkable men during the last interview they ever had, were uttered in Shawanoe, in which tongue one was as much adept as the other.

"I am your prisoner, Shawanoe," added the ranger, after announcing his surrender, and looking his master straight in the face with an expression in which there was not a trace of fear or shrinking.

The Panther, after crossing the stream just beyond the bend where he had parted from Missionary Finley and Agnes Altman, ran his canoe under the bank and disembarked. He was but a few paces away when Kenton appeared on the scene. He now stood erect, his rifle in hand, and towahawk in his girdle. Steadily surveying his approaching enemy, he must have perceived on the instant that he was wholly unarmed. Had it been otherwise the meeting between the two would have been of a different nature.

"Wa-on-mon takes no prisoners," was the alarming response of the chieftain.

"True enough ; you didn't take me ; I threw

myself into your arms ; you can't help yourself, but I needn't tell the Panther that if I had a gun or a knife there would be no surrender."

"If Wa-on-mon gives to the pale face a knife will he fight?"

"The Panther should know better than to ask that question. Have I ever shrunk from meeting any red man?"

The ranger made no reference to that encounter the previous summer, when he gave back his life to the Panther. Such a reminder would be in the nature of an appeal and Simon Kenton asked mercy of no man, much less would he seem to do so of an Indian.

"If I take your knife what will you do for a weapon?" added the hunter.

"Wa-on-mon has his tomahawk."

"There's no likeness atween them," Kenton was quick to remark, for he believed he could dodge the formidable missile, and then would be at advantage, and he would scorn to accept such a favor. "Get a knife from some of your warriors that can't be far off and then

we can fight on equal terms as two brave men should fight."

Instead of replying to this pat observation, the chieftain gave a wholly different turn to his words.

"Why is the white man without his rifle? What has he done with his knife?"

Kenton always maintained to the end of his life that when the Panther asked these two questions he smiled. Never before had any one seen that dark countenance illumined by anything of that nature, for rarely indeed did the light of merry quip enter the soul of the wrathful Shawanoe.

"But I seen the corners of his mouth twitch," remarked Kenton fully a half-century later, in relating the incident, "and there was a pecul'ar twinkle in the Shawanoe's eyes, and when a varmint shows them signs you can make up your mind that there ain't anything of the natur' of murder in his heart. I knowed from that minute I had nothing to fear from the Panther, onless one of his ugly moods should happen to come onto him."

"I lost them," replied the ranger with the

most serious countenance he could assume in answer to the questions of the chieftain.

“The white man was frightened; he ran like a deer; he threw away his gun and his knife that he might run faster.”

“The Panther speaks with a single tongue, but he is wrong; the Shawanoes took the white man’s weapons from him.”

Although the chieftain must have suspected this truth, it was evident that he knew there was a good deal behind the statement in which he felt considerable curiosity. Nothing, however, in his looks and manner showed it, but Kenton gave him the information that he knew would be welcome.

“Red Bird and his warriors encamped last night near the Ohio. I was watching them, when one of his men stole up and struck me down and knocked all my wits out of me at the same time. When I came to they had me fast and took away my knife and gun. They tied me to a tree, and, when morning came, piled wood around me and set fire to it. It was then that a white man fired a shot which cut the thong, and I ran into the woods. I

had no weapons, and the Shawanoes chased me a long way."

"What white man fired the shot that set the prisoner free?"

"That I can not tell you, Wa-on-mon, for I did not see him. I suspect it was the great hunter, Boone, or some one of the scouts from the block-house."

"It was a brave and skilful deed. Have the Shawanoes seized the white man who fired the gun?"

"Neither can I answer that, Wa-on-mon, but," added Kenton, with a twinkle and half-smile, "I don't think it likely, for you see he had a better start than I did, and had his gun, too. They didn't catch me, and I see no reason why they should catch him, whoever he was."

"The Shawanoe runner that chased him may be fleeter of foot than those who frightened my brother."

"I'll be shot if that could be!" exclaimed Kenton, quick to note the last words used by the Panther; "I never had such a chase in my life; I drew away from all of 'em except

one; I could not shake him off till I jumped into the water and swam most of the way under it."

The chieftain turned his head and glanced across the stream. Imitating him, Kenton, to his surprise, saw the warrior to whom he had just referred, standing in full view on the other side evidently watching the two with the closest interest. He would have been glad to come over and join them, but dared not do so without permission from the Panther.

While the ranger was looking at the Shawanoe that had given him so hard a chase, another and another warrior came out of the wood and appeared at his side, until the four that had been distanced were with him. They recognized their war chief, and feared to run the risk of offending him by venturing another step nearer. Knowing the white man was unarmed and standing in the presence of their resistless leader, they felt no fear of his ultimate escape.

"How many warriors had Red Bird with him?" asked the Panther in that indifferent manner peculiar to his people, but which did

not deceive Kenton, who was convinced that the war chief desired to meet his subordinate, and was, therefore, interested in him and his whereabouts.

"I should say about twenty," replied the ranger, indicating by twice opening and shutting his thumbs and fingers the number he had in mind, "but they were coming and going and I may have missed some of 'em."

The informant took care to avoid reference to the stirring events of the preceding night, because that had resulted in the death of several warriors, the knowledge of which might enrage the Panther.

The good angel was now at the elbow of the chieftain and he was listening to its whisperings. Ill would the prisoner fare if it should be driven away.

"My brother will be a child in the woods without his gun and knife," said the Panther in a gentler voice than he had used since the meeting of the two, and with an expression of friendly interest that made Kenton forget for the time that they had ever been enemies.

"The distance to the block-house is but a

few miles ; I need no gun to reach it, and when I am there the Panther knows I shall not want for weapons."

The chieftain nodded toward his canoe as he walked thither. Kenton followed and waited on the water's margin until the Shawanoe shoved the boat clear of the land. The latter laid his rifle in the bow and motioned to his companion to enter. The latter did so and seated himself near the middle. The Panther gave the craft a shove, and stepping in at the stern, picked up the paddle, and thus, as may be said, became master of the proceedings.

It will be noted that the white man was between the Indian and the single gun in the canoe. With his unsurpassable dexterity, Kenton was sure he could seize the rifle, and turn the tables on his captor, or, in the common parlance of the present day, "get the drop" on him.

But why think of such a thing? No inducement could lead Simon Kenton to make the attempt.

The ranger saw only one possible cause for

uneasiness. The five Shawanoes were still on the other shore closely watching the movements of the two in the boat. They would not willingly see the white man depart unquestioned, and though the five combined dare not gainsay the mighty Wa-on-mon, it was not impossible that they would suggest some change in his plan which might prove acceptable to him. This change would probably mean a fight, and, while it need not be repeated that Simon Kenton shrank from a physical contest with no man when the field was a fair one, he was apprehensive of treachery, not from the Panther, but from the warriors, who, like all their race, were adepts in that species of warfare.

The misgiving of the fugitive was increased when he noted that the chief headed the boat toward the group, who, standing near each other, never removed their gaze from the canoe and its occupants.

"There's going to be a rumpus," was his conclusion; "the Panther has got some plan in his head—I'll be shot if I'm so sartin', either," added the ranger, as the Shawanoe

shied the boat away from shore, to the evident surprise, if not disappointment, of the warriors awaiting him. One of them made as if to keep pace with the chieftain, but a glance from the latter was enough to check any such design.

The Panther continued driving the craft forward at a moderate speed until some two or three hundred yards above the point where his pursuers were gathered, when he swerved it into shore, and knowing the meaning of the act, Kenton stepped out. He turned about expecting the Panther to do the same, or at least make some explanation, but the chieftain did neither. He did not so much as glance at the white man whose life he had given back to him, even as he had received his own from the white man, but sent the frail craft skimming down stream toward the warriors.

Kenton was less surprised than any other person would have been.

"What's the use of him and me saying anything more?" he mused, as he stood for a few minutes watching the vanishing Indian ;



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“we’ve said enough to understand each other. I let up on him when I had him down last summer, and he’s just now done the same for me. We didn’t say nothin’ ’bout it, but that’s what it means.

“Now the account is squared, and we stand as though nothin’ of the kind had ever took place. It will be nip and tuck when we meet next time, and Heaven only knows who it will be that wins. There he goes, and I wonder when we’ll meet again.”

But Simon Kenton and Wa-on-mon, the fierce leader of the Shawanoes, never met again.

CHAPTER XXIII.

JOURNEYING SOUTHWARD.

IT was a strange situation for Simon Kenton, wandering thus through an Indian country without even a pocket knife to serve him as a weapon. He was liable to come across some of the Shawanoes, or they were likely to strike his trail, in which event his only recourse, like the hare, would be his heels.

He did not feel altogether at ease concerning the five warriors whom he had left behind him, and who were but a comparatively slight distance away. It was possible that the Panther would change his mind, and, looking upon the accounts between himself and the white man as squared, give the pursuers liberty to do as they chose.

It was this reflection which made Kenton unusually alert. He took every possible

means of obliterating his trail, stepping with extreme care and calling into play all his skill, until his fear of that particular group soon passed. He had made his course so eccentric and winding and his footprints so light that the keenest-eyed Shawanoe would be obliged continually to search and study for "sign." That precluded all speed, and hence, by keeping a smart pace himself, nothing was to be dreaded from them. At the same time his woodcraft must prevent his running into new danger. He glided in and out among the trees as if "shod with silence," and rapidly lessened the distance he had to travel to reach the block-house, on which all his hopes now depended.

Kenton was treading his way through the forest in this manner, when he was surprised to discover that he had struck the fresh trail of some one else going in the same direction. A professional examination of the footprints revealed that one set was made by a white man and the other by a girl or young woman wearing a very small shoe.

"That hits me powerful qu'ar," mused the

ranger, who summoned all his wonderful woodcraft to his help. "In the fust place, the only gal in Ohio that can leave such a purty, well-shaped trail as that is Agnes Altman, and it follows consequently, therefore, that it's her that left them footprints, and she's making for the block-house over the same road I'm follerin'.

"The last I heered of the gal was from the younker Ashbridge, who told me 'bout her being grabbed up from his side last night, when it was too dark for him to see anything round him. It can't be the younker that's with her, for that doesn't stand to reason.

"That p'int being settled, the question is, who is it that is walkin' just ahead of the gal, for she steps nearly all the time in his tracks. It might be some of the boys that's run 'cross her and is taking her home."

But this theory, as Kenton quickly saw, was untenable.

"What's become of them two Wyandots (for I know the Antelope had a companion) that run off with the gal? Why, it was just their luck, like mine, to run across the Pan-

ther, and he's made 'em let her go. Missionary Finley has a way of giving his right foot a little more turn, as he walks, than he does with his other foot. That's what has been done on this trail; it follers consequently, therefore, that the man with the gal is the parson. It couldn't be so very long ago that the start was made for the block-house, and as they are traveling the same way as me, it follers consequently, therefore, that I stand a powerful chance of overhauling them before they reach the post."

It will be seen that the ranger, starting with a correct premise, had reached the logical conclusion of his argument.

Within the succeeding fifteen minutes he overtook his friends, who, it need not be said, gave him most cordial greeting and welcome. The missionary remarking the absence of weapons on the person of the ranger, the latter told his experience of the preceding twenty-four hours, which fully explained his plight. Mr. Finley and Agnes, in turn, made known what had befallen them, so that a full understanding was quickly reached.

“How dreadfully anxious father and mother must be,” remarked the young woman; “and George, too,” she added, with a blush—“how he must feel!”

“There can’t be no doubt of that, gal, but it won’t last long.”

“You think he went to the block-house?”

“I’ve no doubt of it. I told the younker that if I didn’t get back to him by sunup he must wait no longer, but hurry to the fort and get what help he could to foller after you and the Wyandots. I’m sure that’s what he set out to do.”

“We mustn’t forget Jethro, either,” added Agnes, whose heart went out in sympathy to all that were imperiled; “what of him?”

“There don’t seem to be any use thinking of him.”

“What do you mean?” she asked in alarm; “do you think that any ill has befallen him?”

“Can’t tell, but that darky is the most powerful qu’ar creatur I ever run agin in this part of the world. He’s always doing something that nobody else, not even me or Boone,

dare try, and yet he seems to come out on top every time."

"But, Simon," said the missionary, "it is not reasonable to suppose that that can always last. God has been merciful beyond our deserts to all of us, and yet he works through well-established laws, and those who break them must expect, sooner or later, to incur the penalty."

"True, parson, true; but with the darky it 'pears always to be later. I don't know where he is or what has become of him, but it'll be the greatest s'prise of my life if, when we reach the fort, we don't find him eating his dinner there. Ef it's all the same to you?" added Kenton, with a grin, extending his hand for the rifle which Agnes was carrying.

"But what will I do?" she asked in turn, smiling and hesitating, but finally passing the weapon to him.

"It don't amount to much, that's true," remarked Kenton, turning the plaything over in his hand and hefting it, "but if we get into a snarl it'll make a powerful handy club."

"You dare to use it that way!" said Agnes,

with a warning shake of her head, "and I will never let you take it in your hand again."

"I offered to carry it for her," said the missionary, "but she would not trust it with me. Evidently I am not as much in her good graces as you."

They had made quite a pause in the woods, during which Kenton's practiced eye detected no sign of danger. When he felt the familiar grasp of a rifle in his hand, even though the weapon was an insignificant one as compared with his own, his self-reliance and confidence were vastly increased. He formed the belief that there was little, if anything, to fear from the Shawanoes behind him. Even if the Panther did not forbid them to attempt to pursue him, they would find too many difficulties in the way, as previously explained, to do it with success. Besides, the little party was steadily nearing the block-house, and were more likely to meet friends than enemies.

Agnes, by request, walked a few paces in advance. If she were seen by any Indians before they saw the men, they would not fire upon her, but would try to take her prisoner.

The missionary and the ranger walked side by side, speaking earnestly together and continually glancing here and there and everywhere, for it must not be supposed that they relied in any degree upon the protection their companion might accidentally give them. Caution, alertness and vigilance became the second nature of the woodsmen and rangers in the days of the pioneers.

“Simon,” said Mr. Finley in his grave voice, “have you learned of any expedition by President Washington against the Indians of the West?”

“Yes; Red Bird and me had a little conversation—natural, you know, like—when he was making ready to use me to warm his hands by, and he told me that such a thing was going to be done, or rather tried?”

“Strange how the Indians should hear of it so soon, and yet it isn’t the first time that they have received the news before we knew anything about it.”

“I think, parson, that the birds of the air carry the news to ’em.”

“There have been signal fires burning on

the high grounds for weeks past, and you know as well as I of the restlessness among the red men."

"And I've larned, too, that the varmints are making ready to go on the warpath. There's a fight coming that's to be the biggest we ever had in this part of the world."

"It will result in the overthrow of the red men this time. The mistakes of Colonel Crawford, General St. Clair and others can not be repeated. President Washington was thrown into a rage by St. Clair's disaster, for he had warned him against the very blunders he made. They will not be repeated. I have heard that General Wayne is to lead this expedition."

"That's the news that come to me, so it must be true."

"Then woe betide the Panther and his people! It will be the most crushing blow they have ever received."

"Did you larn anything from him, parson?"

"Not directly. He told me nothing, and I was too prudent to question him, but understanding his nature as I did, I could read him

well. He is traveling through the country, meeting the chiefs of the Pottawatomies, Wyandots, Miamis, Shawanoes and other tribes, and nerving and arranging with them for the final conflict, which he is confident will prove a more overwhelming disaster to the whites than all others together. He is a strange being, subject to strange moods."

"I run right into him, never dreaming that he was anywhere in the neighborhood, and as I hadn't no weapons, he had me; so I s'rendered."

"It was the only thing you could do, Simon; you could make no fight, and if you had turned to run—"

"He would have dropped me at the first step; why didn't he do it, parson, anyway?"

"Providentially he was in one of his magnanimous moods. A few minutes earlier or later, and he might have forgotten that little affair of last summer, between you and him."

"Do you think he did forget it?"

"Of course not. There's little difference, Simon, after all, between a white and red man. The Panther has the vices and virtues of his

people, perhaps a few more vices than are his share, but though he drank a great deal of fire-water years ago, it is a long time since he has touched it. He is kind to his squaw and children, but his hatred of the white men is like that of King Philip of Mount Hope and Pontiac, chief of the Ottawas. If it was not a prompting of gratitude, why did he spare you at all? You will find gratitude and ingratitude among those people just as you do among our own."

"But if him and me meet again, parson, what then?"

"I have no doubt it will be as if your meeting last summer and to-day had never taken place. In other words, the account between you has been squared."

"That's my idea exactly."

"Therefore, I hope you may never meet, Simon."

"I don't know as I've much feeling one way or t'other 'bout it, but I don't understand, parson, how he was marcifful to the gal, to little Mabel Ashbridge, to me, and always to you; he never offered to harm you."

“ Ah, my good friend, you have no conception of the many narrow escapes I have had from Wa-on-mon. He has been on the point more than once of sinking his tomahawk in my brain, but was restrained by a power higher than his own. When I came out of the woods this morning, and hailed him and asked him to take me in his canoe, I saw he was in one of his ugly tempers, for he was then on a tour among the tribes to rouse them against the whites, but my confidence in him disarmed his enmity for the moment, just as your surrender did.”

“ And was that the end of his ugliness toward you ?”

“ By no means. He spared the Antelope and his companion, Between-the-Rocks, after which Satan overcame him again, and he determined to kill me and Agnes.”

Kenton looked at the missionary in amazement.

“ I read it in his face, and showed him I knew it. He was cowed, and by and by his evil angel left him, and was still absent when you fell into his hands.”

“What I don’t understand is how it is that a varmint that has done all the deeds he has ever feels like letting up on any pale face.”

“There is no heart so bad, Simon, that there is not some good in it. You had the Panther in your power last summer, and yet, when he expected no mercy, you extended it to him. It was the same influence that stayed his hand, when all his evil promptings said, ‘Strike and spare not.’ It was that still, small voice which whispers to you in the watches of the night, at high noon, when you are alone in the depths of the woods or among the abodes of men, urging you to give your heart to God, and to try to shape your life so that it will always be pleasing in His sight.”

Kenton was silent, for this was not the first time the words of the good man had impressed him more deeply than the utterances of any other person. Laying his hand affectionately on the shoulder of the ranger, the missionary asked, in a low voice:

“Will you think of these things, Simon?”

“I will,” was the fervent response.

“Then, with that tact which is too rare

among well-meaning men, Mr. Finley dropped the momentous subject. He had sowed the good seed, and was content to let it take root and grow of itself.

"Something seems to interest Agnes," he remarked.

The young woman, who was a couple of rods in advance, had stopped and was looking at her friends with a troubled expression. Suddenly she walked rapidly toward them.

"What is it, my child?" asked the missionary, as she joined them.

"I think there is some one a short distance ahead of us in the wood."

"I know it," said Kenton, compressing his lips and grasping the small rifle more firmly.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

THAT which Agnes Altman suspected was a certainty to Simon Kenton, though no person was in sight, and the missionary at his side had caught no suspicious sign. In accordance with his training, the ranger held himself prepared for danger, though he was so strongly convinced that it was not of that nature that he did not warn his companions to protect themselves by taking shelter behind the trees.

Suddenly Kenton emitted a low, bird-like whistle, which was instantly responded to from some point a slight way in advance. The missionary smiled, for he knew what it meant.

“Give yourself no alarm, my child,” he said to Agnes; “friends are near us.”

The words were yet in his mouth when just

in advance appeared three figures, who were recognized at the first glance. The first was the fine athletic form of the famous pioneer Daniel Boone, the second was George Ashbridge, and the third the no less welcome Jethro Juggens, who from some cause was doing a vast amount of grinning and chuckling.

Boone shook hands with his old friend Kenton, the two exchanging characteristic observations, then warmly pressed the palm of the missionary, whom he held in the highest respect and affection, and finally greeted the blushing Agnes, whose heart was overflowing with very fulness of joy and gratitude. Bashfulness restrained her and George in the presence of the others, but when their hands met in fervent pressure, and they looked in each other's eyes, heart spoke to heart, and they could well afford to defer the more loving embrace until no other eyes should behold them.

"Why don't you come forward, younker?" called Kenton to Jethro, who held back and chuckled more than ever. "There ain't none

in this crowd that I'm gladder to see than you."

The African advanced, and was quickly made to feel that no person ever had a more sincere friend than each one in that little party was to him.

Boone explained that he was at the block-house when Ashbridge came in with his story of tragedy and despair. Indeed, he seemed hopeless. A party of half-a-dozen could have been formed at once to set out in quest of Agnes, whose father insisted upon being one of the rescuers; but Boone was inexorable. He would allow no one to go with him except young Ashbridge, and the reason for taking him was that he might locate the trail of the Wyandots. They being only two in number, Boone saw that it was not strength that was needed so much as celerity and skill in woodcraft. Besides, he expected help from Kenton, who was engaged on the same business, he never dreaming that his old friend would make such a blunder as to allow himself to fall into the hands of the Shawanoes.

Boone and Ashbridge were on their way

when they came upon Jethro Juggens, making for the block-house. He it was who made known the startling truth about Kenton, though it was supplemented by the welcome news that by means of a rifle-shot he had cut the cord that bound the ranger to the tree and saw him leap off in the woods.

“What!” exclaimed Kenton, fairly leaping from his feet at this point; “do you mean to tell me that it was that black scamp who fired that shot?”

“I’s de gemman,” replied the proud Jethro. “Is dis de fust time, Marse Kenton, dat yo’ knowed I kin shoot a rifle like a house afire?”

“Wal, ef that don’t beat all natur’! I never dreamed of its being you. And how did you manage to save your own hide? The varmints knowed what it was that set me free, and they must have looked for you.”

“So dey did—dey did, Marse Kenton, and dey found me! But what did Jethro Juggens keer? He wanted ’em to find him. I jes’ waited till dey come up, wid dat heathen Red Bird at dar head. Dar war ’leben ob ’em altogedder, for I stood ’em up in a row and

counted 'em free times. Den I begun wid Red Bird, and took him by de heels and banged him agin de tree so hard dat his head flew off; den I took de next one and sarved him de same way, and so on till de whole 'leben—"

Just then Jethro observed the shocked look on the face of Agnes, the reproachful expression on that of the missionary, and the smiles on the countenances of the others. He stopped short in his narration, and, after clearing his throat, amended his narrative so as to make it truthful in every particular, being to the effect that the Shawanoes did not search the tree-tops for the daring marksman, and he had only to wait until the danger was past, when he came down and made for the block-house.

And within the following hour Boone, Kenton, Finley, Ashbridge, Jethro and Agges arrived at the same frontier post, where, for the time, all peril was at an end.

The battle of Fallen Timbers, as it is known in history, was fought between the expedition led by General Anthony Wayne and the war-

riors of the combined tribes of the West in August, 1794, and resulted in the utter repulse and overthrow of the Indians. The treaty of Greenville, made the following year, brought a reign of peace to the frontier which was comparatively unbroken until the war of 1812, when Tecumseh, unquestionably the greatest American Indian who ever lived, roused his people to resistance.

Tecumseh was a young warrior in the battle of Fallen Timbers, and fought by the side of Wa-on-mon, known as the Panther. He saw this war chief, when leading one of the most daring attacks of that sanguinary engagement, instantly killed by a Kentucky rifleman, who afterwards stated that he recognized the Panther, and, knowing what a scourge he had been to the settlements in Ohio and Kentucky, deliberately selected him as a target.

Peace having finally come to the frontier, there came with it the time when all agreed that it was prudent and safe for the Ashbridge and Altman families to remove their homes from under the wing, as it may be called, of the block-house to the clearing on the Ken-

tucky side of the river from which they had been turned back after reaching it. The location was so favorable and the soil so productive that with them went several other families, so that in the course of a few months quite a little settlement had been founded, and the foundation laid for one of the leading towns of the State.

So far as George Ashbridge and Agnes Altman were personally concerned, the course of true love ran smooth between them until the close of life. The wedding took place shortly after their removal to the clearing, and was one of the most memorable for years. It was attended by guests who came a distance of more than twenty miles. Boone and Kenton journeyed much further, indeed, in order to reach the scene from Boonesborough. Of that merry crowd, none was merrier and happier than Jethro Juggens, whose jigs, breakdowns and antics were a source of delight to the joyous crowd that fairly overran the place.

He, like George and Agnes, was permitted by Providence to live to a good old age.

When the couple at last followed the friends that had gone on before, they left a fragrant and blessed memory behind them, and their descendants to-day are among the most honored names in Ohio and Kentucky.

Daniel Boone, the most famous pioneer of the West, was a native of Bucks county, Pennsylvania, and was just three years to a day the junior of General Washington. When Boone was a young man his father removed to North Carolina. The son married Rebecca Ryan in 1755, when he was about twenty years of age. The children born of this marriage were James, Israel, Jesse, Daniel, Nathan, Susan, Jemima, Lavinia and Rebecca.

In May, 1769, Boone accompanied an exploring party which visited the wilds of Kentucky. They were enchanted with what they saw. Boone and a companion remained, and a series of thrilling adventures with the Indians opened, which it may be said lasted for nearly a half-century. In the autumn of 1774 he started with his family to make his home in Kentucky. On the way thither

Boone's eldest son was killed in an attack by red men at Cumberland Gap, and the party returned to North Carolina, against the protest of Boone, who soon returned. He acted as captain in the Dunmore war and commanded three contiguous garrisons on the frontier. The present town of Harrodsburg was settled in the spring of 1774, and is therefore the oldest settlement in Kentucky. Boonesborough, named for the pioneer, was founded about a year later. In the autumn of 1775, Boone, with a large company, including his own family, left North Carolina, and safely reaching Boonesborough, made their home in that frontier town. Boone's wife and daughter were the first white women who ever "stood upon the banks of the wild and beautiful Kentucky." His services there, and his numerous stirring experiences, would require a volume for their narration, and are a part of the history of the West. He attained the rank of major and then colonel, was repeatedly captured by Indians, was engaged in numberless affrays with them, until peace finally came to the border.

Although Boone made his possessions around Boonesborough very valuable, he lost them all through the rapacity of land speculators. He removed to Point Pleasant, on the Kanawha River, in Virginia, where he stayed several years, tilling the ground with great industry and occasionally indulging in his favorite pastime of hunting. The favorable reports from Missouri led to his emigration thither, near the close of the last century. There he died, September 26, 1820, in the eighty-sixth year of his age. The remains of his wife and himself were removed to Frankfort, Kentucky, in 1845, with impressive ceremonies, a striking and eloquent address being delivered by Senator J. J. Crittenden.

Even Lord Byron rendered his tribute in the following words :

“Of all men

Who passes for in life and death most lucky,
Of all the great names which in our faces stare,
Is Daniel Boone, backwoodsman of Kentucky.

“Crime came not near him—she is not the child
Of solitude. Health shrank not from him, for
Her home is in the rarely-trodden wild.”

Simon Kenton's fame as hunter, ranger and pioneer is scarcely second to that of Daniel Boone, of whom he was twenty years the junior. He was a native of Fauquier County, Virginia, whence he fled to Kentucky when only sixteen years old, under the mistaken belief that he had killed a young man in a personal encounter. He served as a scout in the Dunmore war, during which the kindness he showed to Simon Girty, who served with him, led to the interposition of the renegade years afterward when Kenton was condemned to death by the Indians.

Kenton commanded a company of volunteers in General Clark's expedition against the Indians. He had charge of another company in the autumn of 1782, and acted as guide to several other expeditions. Like Boone he was reduced to beggary by the greed of land sharks, and in 1802 removed to Ohio and settled in Urbana. Three years later he was elected a brigadier-general of militia. Five years afterward he was converted under the preaching of Reverend Mr. Finley, and joined the Methodist Episcopal Church. In

1813, when nearly three-score years of age, he fought bravely at the battle of the Thames. It was Kenton who, after the battle, identified the body of Tecumseh, the greatest genius ever produced by the American race.

At the conclusion of the war of 1812 Kenton returned to his home, where he lived until 1820, when he removed with his family to the headwaters of Mad River, Logan county, Ohio, near the spot where many years before he had been tied to the stake by the Indians and condemned to death. He was persecuted so relentlessly by land sharpers because of the taxes he was unable to pay upon his worthless mountain tracts in Kentucky that the Legislature passed an act in 1824, releasing the lands from all tax claims. Shortly after, through the exertions of Judge Burnett and General Vance, Congress granted him a pension of \$240 a year for life. He died in April, 1836, having, like Boone, passed the age of four score :

“ And tall and strong and swift of foot are they,
Beyond the dwarfing city's pale abortions,
Because their thoughts had never been the prey

Of care and gain ; the green woods were their fortunes ;

No sinking spirits told them they grew grey,
No fashions made them apes of her distortions.
Simple they were, not savage ; and their rifles,
Though very true, were not yet used for trifles."

" Motion was in their days, rest in their slumbers,
And cheerfulness the handmaid of their toil.
Nor yet too many nor too few their numbers ;
Corruption could not make their hearts her soil ;
The lust which stings, the splendor which encum-
bers,

With the free foresters divide no spoil ;
Serene, not sullen, were the solitudes
Of this unsighing people of the woods."

